

# Highlights of results

*This section highlights the results to which the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) made a meaningful contribution in 2017. The results are organized according to the Office's thematic priorities set out in the OHCHR Management Plan 2014-2017 (OMP). The Office's work is grounded in its theory of change and the thematic expected accomplishments (see Annex I) that define the intermediate results to which the Office contributes in the pursuit of its long-term goal – all human rights for all.*

*The Office's four-year planning cycle ended in 2017 and Annex II provides an overview of the extent to which – over those four years – the expected accomplishments and targets set have been achieved, as well as some lessons learned over the cycle.*

*For a general overview of UN Human Rights' role in the developments listed below, please refer to the end of this chapter. For a more detailed description of its specific role in these results, please refer to the chapters on field presences and headquarter divisions that can be found on the USB key that is annexed to this report or on the Office's website.*

## Strengthening international human rights mechanisms

*A total of 72 per cent of national expected accomplishments were fully or partially achieved over the last four years, with varying levels of progress achieved in those that are remaining.*

### Ratification

In 2017, a total of 42 new ratifications of or accessions to the international human rights treaties were deposited with the Secretary-General. The examples listed below illustrate this achievement.

In the Africa region, **Cape Verde** ratified the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) as well as the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OP-ICESCR); the **Central African Republic** ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP-CRC-AC); **Comoros** acceded to CAT; **Malawi** and **Seychelles** acceded to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED); and **Sao Tomé and Príncipe** ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(ICCPR); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW); the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on the abolition of the death penalty (ICCPR-OP2).

In the Americas, **Panama** ratified OP-CRC-AC, while in the Asia Pacific region, **Fiji** ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and **Myanmar** ratified ICESCR. In Europe, the Government of the **Republic of Moldova** launched internal procedures for ratifying the Optional Protocol to CRPD.

### Engagement of Member States with international human rights mechanisms

Member States engaged with international human rights mechanisms and undertook efforts to comply with their findings and recommendations. In relation to the Human Rights Council (HRC), during 2017, Member States were actively involved in three regular sessions, one special session and more than 140 meetings to all of which UN Human Rights provided support services. Furthermore, as a result of assistance received from the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the work of the Human Rights Council, 27 delegates from 26 LDCs and SIDS (13 from Africa, four from the



View of the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, during the 34th session of the Human Rights Council, February 2017. © UN Photo/Elma Okic

Caribbean and Latin America and nine from Asia and the Pacific) participated in sessions of the HRC. Regarding the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), all 193 Member States were reviewed by the mechanism for the second time with second cycle coming to an end in 2017. In May 2017, the third cycle started, providing an opportunity to strengthen the engagement with all States on the follow-up and implementation of recommendations from the international human rights mechanisms. A total of 28 reviews were conducted during the year. With the financial support of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Participation in the Universal Periodic Review, the participation of representatives from 15 Member States in UPR Working Group sessions was facilitated in 2017.

The increasing engagement of Member States with the HRC, the UPR and other international human rights mechanisms contributed to the achievement of the following results.

### Coordination mechanisms

Progress has been achieved in relation to the establishment and strengthening of national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up on the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms.

The Government of **Liberia** established a national treaty reporting mechanism, in November, and the Governments of **Nigeria** and **Cape Verde** established national mechanisms for drafting reports to the international human rights mechanisms and following up on their recommendations. **Sierra Leone** re-established a steering committee to coordinate the reporting to the human rights treaty bodies, while in **Niger**, the interministerial committee responsible for the elaboration of reports to the human rights treaty bodies established a permanent secretary to coordinate its activities more efficiently. In addition, the **State of Palestine**<sup>1</sup> created an interministerial committee charged with coordinating the implementation of its international human rights obligations. In **Tajikistan**, the Government adopted new regulations in relation the Inter-Agency Commission on the Implementation of International Obligations in the Field of Human Rights, which contributed to expanding the participation of civil society and promoting the increased coordination of relevant State bodies in the implementation of international human rights obligations.

<sup>1</sup> Reference to the State of Palestine should be understood in compliance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19.

## National Human Rights Action Plans

Member States developed, adopted and implemented national human rights plans. They also compiled and systematized the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms in order to facilitate their implementation and follow-up.

In **Cape Verde** and **Senegal**, action plans were adopted which incorporated all of the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms, while **Cameroon**, the **Republic of the Congo** and **Equatorial Guinea** engaged in the process of developing similar national plans of action. The **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, **Malawi** and **Somalia** already developed such plans and their validation and adoption are expected to take place in 2018. In addition, the Government of **Tajikistan** adopted a national plan to implement the recommendations issued by the UPR.

In other countries, such as **Burkina Faso**, **Cameroon**, **Equatorial Guinea**, **Gabon**, **the Gambia**, **Kenya**, the **Republic of the Congo**, **Sao Tomé and Príncipe** and **South Sudan**, recommendations were compiled and clustered, with implementation matrices developed to follow up on their implementation.

UN Human Rights also supported countries' efforts to develop and improve their digital applications to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms. For instance, in 2016, the Government of **Uganda** launched a tool that has been updated to incorporate a monitoring and evaluation framework. In the **Dominican Republic**, a web-based monitoring application was launched, which is the first tool of its kind in the Caribbean. In **Paraguay**, a revised version of the monitoring tool, named SIMORE, was launched, which enables users

to link the implementation of the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms with relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A similar tool was piloted in **Saudi Arabia** in May.

## Reporting

In 2017, the human rights treaty bodies considered a total of 165 State Party reports and received an additional 138 State Party reports. Furthermore, through the Treaty Body Capacity-Building Programme, State officials from approximately 70 countries were trained on reporting to the human rights treaty bodies. The officials trained committed to replicating the training activities at the national level and, to help underpin these capacity-building efforts, UN Human Rights launched a *Training Manual on Reporting to the Treaty Bodies* and an accompanying *Facilitators Guide*.

Among the reports submitted in 2017, it is worth noting that **Benin** submitted overdue initial reports under ICCPR, CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), **Burkina Faso** submitted reports to the UPR, CAT and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the **Central African Republic** developed and submitted its initial report to the ICE-SCR. The Interministerial Committee on Reporting in **Chad** drafted several periodic reports, including under CAT, CRC and ICCPR. **Guinea** submitted the reports on the Optional Protocols to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, as well as under ICCPR, with support provided to the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights. Through a participatory process, **Mali** drafted, validated and submitted its UPR report. In January, **Mauritania** submitted second periodic reports to CAT, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition,

## Advocating for the rights of indigenous environmental defenders in Honduras

The Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples has paid particular attention to the investigation into the killing, in March 2016, of the indigenous environmental defender, Berta Cáceres; most likely killed due to her opposition to the Agua Zarca dam in Honduras. The Special Rapporteur met with Berta Cáceres during a country visit to Honduras in November 2015. Following the killing of Ms. Cáceres, other indigenous defenders were also attacked and another indigenous defender was killed. The Special Rapporteur worked with other special procedures mandate-holders to send a series of communications on the case both to the Government and to financial investors

supporting the dam project. She also highlighted the case in several of her reports and speeches to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. Since then, several financial investors have suspended their funding for the dam project. After a year-long probe, an investigative panel, known as the International Advisory Group of Experts, in November 2017, concluded that Honduran State agents and senior executives of the hydroelectric company, Desarrollos Energéticos, colluded in the planning, execution and cover-up of the assassination of Berta Cáceres. The final report made numerous references to the Special Rapporteur's report on her country visit to Honduras.



Theresa Degener, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, at the tenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in New York, June 2017. © UN Photo/Kim Haughton

**Niger** submitted its overdue reports to CEDAW, while the **Pacific Island Countries (PICs)** submitted 32 initial and periodic reports to various human rights treaty bodies and all PICs completed their second UPR cycle in full compliance with their reporting obligations under this mechanism.

### Engagement with the special procedures

Special procedures mandate-holders carried out 87 country visits to 67 States and territories. One more Member State extended a standing invitation in 2017, namely, **Afghanistan**, bringing the total number of States that have done so to 118. Mandate-holders transmitted a total of 534 communications to 117 States, of which 423 were jointly issued by two or more mandate-holders. The response rate of States to these communications reached 68 per cent. In addition, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances transmitted 990 new cases of enforced disappearance to States, of which 111 were clarified with two individuals being released.

In 2017, Member States reacted to findings and recommendations issued by the special procedures. For example, during a country visit by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples to **Australia**, in March, she raised her concerns about the lack of adequate legal aid and the impact of Government's funding cuts on organizations providing indigenous peoples with legal aid. In part due to this, the Government announced, in May, that it would reverse the budget cuts to indigenous legal aid organizations. In July, a number of special procedures mandate-holders sent a communication to the Government of **Turkey** to raise their concerns about the arrests, incommunicado de-

tentions and investigations of 11 human rights defenders and experts based on their suspected membership in terrorist organizations. On 25 October, 10 of the 11 defenders were released, although they still face terrorism charges.

During the year, non-State actors also engaged with the special procedures. For example, the sixth Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights, held in November, and chaired by the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, brought together more than 2,500 participants from nearly 130 countries, making it the largest global event on business and human rights ever held.

### Engagement of rights-holders with international human rights mechanisms

Civil society actors, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and others engaged with the international human rights mechanisms to direct the attention of the international community towards human rights issues of concern at the national and regional levels.

In 2017, the participation of non-governmental organizations in HRC sessions remained very high with an increase of 14 per cent in the number of oral statements delivered (2,361) and six per cent in the submission of written statements (583). In addition, more than 75 side events were organized in parallel with sessions of the Council. NGOs and other actors, including UN entities, made almost 1,300 submissions to the UPR. Specifically, civil society organizations submitted alternative reports in relation to the reviews of **Benin**, **Burkina Faso** and **Ghana** in 2017 and 2018, respectively; 12 NGOs pre-



The Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation meets with civil society organizations during his official visit to Mexico, May 2017. © OHCHR/Mexico

## African activists use the international human rights mechanisms to advance sexual and reproductive health rights

“For me, the human rights mechanisms are another way to hold governments accountable, especially at a time when there is shrinking civic space and a backlash against gender equality and women’s rights in general,” said Catherine Nyambura, of FemNet, a pan-African women’s organization.

Nyambura participated in a recent special training workshop on using international and regional human rights standards, tools and mechanisms to promote and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights. The workshop was organized in Ethiopia by the UN Human Rights Regional Office for East Africa, along with the East and Southern Africa Regional Office of UNFPA, and brought together stakeholders from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda who work on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including those who work on addressing gender-based violence.

The objective of the workshop was to enhance participants’ understanding of the relevant human rights standards, facilitate the exchange of perspectives and explore how they can use international and regional human rights mechanisms in their work to assist access to sexual and reproductive health services and information.

“Human rights defenders play a crucial role in helping to ensure that no one is left behind by uncovering and addressing inequalities in access to basic quality health services and calling on authorities to respect, protect and fulfil the sexual and reproductive health rights of every individual within their jurisdiction,” said Adwoa Kufuor, UN Human Rights Regional Gender Adviser. “The workshop particularly strengthened the capacity of defenders in the region to engage in advocacy before the

regional and international human rights mechanisms and concluded with the development of concrete follow-up strategies, which they are now in the process of implementing,” she added.

Francis Mutua, from the African Adolescent and Youth Network on Population Development, said the workshop was a big help, especially for young activists, as it gave them a framework and language to work with. He noted that learning about relevant human rights and mechanisms helps broaden thinking and improve the kind of difference that young activists can make. “It shifts the conversations (around youth and sexual and reproductive health) from ‘what do young people want’ to ‘what young people can do?’” he said. “When you link the issues to the international instruments, it opens up your thinking beyond your country. You understand how sexual and reproductive health links to human rights across the whole of the continent.”

The training has also helped to increase the impact of their work, said Jacqueline Mutere from the community-based organization Grace Agenda, which works with girls and women who have suffered sexual violence. Mutere is a survivor of sexual violence that took place in the aftermath of the 2007 Kenyan elections. She said that she now feels empowered to make more focused demands for human rights. For example, she plans to present a case for reparations for women who were victims of post-election sexual assaults to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. “It has opened a door for me to be able to advance the agenda beyond my own country,” she said. “Since my country has ratified many of the treaties available, and they won’t listen to me at home, then I can turn to someone else more international to claim my rights.”

pared submissions for the review of **El Salvador**; 13 submissions were prepared by civil society organizations in **Ecuador**; and nearly 80 alternative reports were submitted by **Tunisian** organizations.

The number of registered individual communications increased from 170 in 2013 to over 300 in 2017, while the number of registered requests under the urgent action procedure of ICPED rose from 50 in 2014 to over 440 in 2017. Civil society actors and NHRIs also engaged with the human rights treaty bodies through the submission of alternative reports and inputs in relation to the review of, for example, **Cambodia** by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); **Chad** by the CRC; the **Dominican Republic** by the Human Rights Committee; **Honduras** by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); **Nicaragua** by the Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW); and **Niger** by CEDAW.

In addition, approximately 16,500 submissions were made by civil society actors to draw the attention of the special procedures to human rights issues of concern. For instance, several individual and joint submissions were made by civil society actors in **Panama** to the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples; and approximately 25 communications were sent to the special procedures by civil society organizations in **Paraguay**.

To support civil society actors in their increased engagement with the international human rights mechanisms, a number of actions were implemented to address reprisals against individuals and organizations cooperating or seeking to cooperate with them. As of the end of 2017, all of the human rights treaty bodies had established working groups or focal points on re-

prisals. Moreover, responding to allegations of threats and reported cases of reprisals against civil society representatives during the UPR or HRC sessions, the President of the Council followed up on reported cases through bilateral meetings and formal correspondence with concerned States and indirectly during the sessions.

### Progressive development of international and regional human rights law

A number of mandate-holders contributed to the development of international human rights law and promotion of good practices through the preparation of reports and guidelines. For example, the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination completed a four-year global study on national legislation in 60 countries across all regions. The study highlighted the need for stronger regulations of private military and security companies, both nationally and internationally, and significantly contributed to the discussions of the intergovernmental working group regarding an international regulatory framework for these actors. The Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy continued his work on a draft legal instrument aimed at regulating surveillance in cyberspace at the global level. In addition, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography presented a thematic report to the HRC on the sale of children and illegal adoptions, contributing to the development of child rights and protection standards in this area. Also, the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity finalized a draft declaration on the right to international solidarity and submitted it to the HRC.

## UN system-wide response to reprisals and intimidation for cooperation on human rights

Efforts to establish a UN system-wide response to reprisals and intimidation for cooperation with the UN on human rights are led by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights. Key achievements in 2017 included the compilation of an unprecedented number of new cases of intimidation and reprisals and trends in 29 countries. This information was included in the annual report of the Secretary-General on “Cooperation with the UN, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights” (A/HRC/36/31), which was presented to the Human Rights Council. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights also used this information in his advocacy with Member States in relation to individual cases of intimidation and reprisals. UN Human Rights

also made gains in its outreach with UN interlocutors at headquarters and field levels. This resulted in enhanced awareness and improved coordination among various UN departments to address relevant cases; the implementation of outreach initiatives to facilitate improved communication and engagement with civil society, especially human rights defenders who are at risk of becoming or are victims of intimidation and reprisals; and high-level engagement with Member States in relation to support for a UN system-wide effort and key intimidation and reprisals cases. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights also addressed particular instances of intimidation and reprisals with members of the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.



The High Commissioner and Commissioners of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights launch a Joint Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas, October 2017. © OHCHR/South America

In relation to the human rights treaty bodies, a number of general comments/general recommendations were issued, including in relation to gender-based violence against women (CEDAW); on the rights of girls and women to education (CEDAW); on State obligations in the context of business activities (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)); on children in street situations (CRC); the rights of children in the context of international migration (CRC and CMW); and the right to live independently and live in the community (CPRD).

The HRC Advisory Committee, with UN Human Rights support, contributed to the progressive development of international human rights standards in the following areas: unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights; the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members; the negative impact of the non-repatriation of funds of illicit origin to the countries of origin on the enjoyment of human rights; regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights; national policies and human rights; the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights; the negative effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of all human rights; activities of vulture funds and their impact on human rights; and local governments and human rights.

### Enhanced coherence between human rights mechanisms

Cooperation of the special procedures with the other international human rights mechanisms continued to be strengthened. For instance, to raise UN human rights experts' awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, some human rights treaty bodies consulted the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on the drafting of general comments (i.e., the Human Rights Committee on the General Comment on article 6 of the ICCPR). The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance enhanced his coordination with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, including by issuing a number of joint press releases and providing inputs to a decision that was adopted by the Committee under its early warning and urgent action procedures. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women collaborated with CEDAW in the development of General Recommendation No. 35 which expands the understanding of what constitutes gender-based violence against women.

There was also enhanced synergy with regional human rights mechanisms. For instance, in May, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights issued a

landmark judgment in favour of the Ogiek peoples in Kenya, making multiple references to the communications and country visit report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. In October, UN Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights launched a Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas through reinforced collaboration between the two organizations on emblematic cases and situations concerning human rights defenders.

Regarding the human rights treaty bodies, at the twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of Chairpersons of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the following recommendations were adopted to: inform the General Assembly about overdue reports to the treaty bodies; strengthen a common approach of the treaty bodies to engagement with NHRIs; and closely follow the accountability framework for the implementation by States of the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In addition, as part of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and UN Human Rights convened an event on “Strengthening cooperation between the international and regional human rights mechanisms on women’s rights,” to discuss ways to enhance cooperation between the international human rights mechanisms for the protection of women’s rights. Subsequently, the Secretary-General requested that UN Human Rights, UN Women and the Department of Political Affairs collaborate to develop a system-wide strategy to protect norms and standards on gender and women’s rights at intergovernmental fora.

## International human rights mechanisms and early warning

The HRC continued to address emerging and ongoing human rights crises in a number of situations. For example, in March 2017, the Council established a commission of inquiry on the human rights situation in **Myanmar**; in December, the Council held a special session on the situation of human rights of the minority Rohingya Muslim population and other minorities in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, and extended the mandate of the Commissions of Inquiry on **Burundi** and the **Syrian Arab Republic**. Furthermore, the Council requested the deployment of a team of international experts to engage with Burundian authorities, in addition to a team of international experts to collect and preserve information concerning the events in the Kasai regions of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and to forward their conclusions to the judicial authorities. Finally, the HRC requested the establishment of a Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on **Yemen**.

The special procedures sought to enhance their early warning capacities and, in 2017, they undertook early action on concerns pertaining to the **Central African Republic, Libya, Myanmar, the Philippines, Syria, Venezuela** and **Yemen**, including through communications, reports to States, statements and press releases. The special procedures also raised the alarm about worrying developments in relation to thematic issues, such as climate change and migration, urging States and other stakeholders to take early action on these matters.



UN Human Rights supports programmes to foster self-sufficiency of persons with disabilities in Mali. © UN Photo/Sylvain Liechti

## Enhancing equality and countering discrimination

*A total of 61 per cent of national expected accomplishments were fully or partially achieved over the last four years, with varying levels of progress achieved in those that are remaining.*

### Compliance of national laws, policies and institutions

Following technical cooperation and other engagement with UN Human Rights, States implemented a number of legislative and institutional changes to tackle multiple forms of discrimination, including those based on race, gender, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

#### Ending racial discrimination

In **Tunisia**, the technical committee established by the Government to develop a draft law on racial discrimination finalized the text, which is expected to be adopted in 2018. In **Mauritania**, the draft Law on Discrimination

was tabled for discussion by the National Assembly at the end of the year. In addition, the Government of **Panama** adopted the Law to Establish the National Secretariat for the Development of Afro-Panamanians.

In relation to national action plans, the National Action Plan against Racism of **Nigeria**, based on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, was adopted and will be integrated into the National Action Plan on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which is currently under review. In addition, the National Human Rights Action Plan of **Sri Lanka** for 2017-2021 contains specific action points to confront discrimination and promote equality. Moreover, the Government of **South Africa** launched public consultations in relation to the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

Some positive results were achieved in integrating the rights of indigenous peoples into national legal frameworks. For instance, the discussions for a friendly settlement agreement between the Government of **Paraguay** and the Ayoreo Totobiegosode People began in February 2017 and focused on their ancestral land rights, as well as the establishment of health and education programmes and the promotion and protection of other human rights. In November, the Government initiated the development of a draft agreement.

## Ending discrimination on the basis of gender

Progress was made by a number of countries in the approval of legislation and policies to combat discrimination on the basis of gender. For instance, gender equality laws were approved in the **Republic of Moldova, Tanzania** and **Zambia**. Legislation on particular women's rights issues was also developed, including on domestic violence in **Belarus** and the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, female genital mutilation in **the Gambia** and on forced marriage in **Kyrgyzstan**.

In **Mexico**, the General Law on Torture and the General Law on Disappearances were adopted, both of which establish aggravating causes when the crimes are committed against individuals and groups in vulnerable situations, including children, women, persons with disabilities, elder persons, migrants and indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the new Criminal Code of the state of Coahuila was adopted, which decriminalizes abortion in cases where there is a risk to the health of the woman and/or when the pregnancy results from a sexual crime. In **Tunisia**, a law on violence against women and girls, in full compliance with international human rights standards, was adopted, in July.

Following his January visit to **Saudi Arabia**, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights made recommendations to the Government to lift restrictions that have a negative impact on women's abilities to work, travel and become fully engaged as productive members of society. His visit and recommendations contributed to gradual changes in those discriminatory measures against women. In April, King Salman issued an order to review and amend all existing regulations and procedures that require a male guardian's consent for women to access public services. In September, the Government made an historic decision to lift the driving ban for women.

The Parliament of **Morocco** adopted legislation establishing a National Authority to combat discrimination and enhance equality. **Benin** adopted a plan of action on gender while, in **Senegal**, the Government developed and implemented a national action plan to fight discrimination against women and combat gender-based violence.

At the subregional level, Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted four key documents to advance gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of women in political, peace and security processes.

At the global level, the HRC resolution on the elimination of discrimination against women and girls

(A/HRC/35/L.29) focused on the implementation of good practices on the subject and called upon States to, among other recommendations, repeal all laws that exclusively or disproportionately criminalize actions or behaviours of women and girls, and laws that discriminate against them; promote laws and programmes that facilitate good practices related to women's and girls' empowerment; and guarantee women's equal enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

## Ending discrimination against persons with disabilities

At the global level, the Human Rights Council Task Force on Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities finalized and adopted an action plan, which identifies four priority areas and related actions to increase accessibility to the work of the Council and its mechanisms in Geneva. At the regional level, the Council of the **European Union (EU)** took steps to promote and protect disability rights and adopted Council Conclusions on Enhancing Community-Based Support and Care for Independent Living. The Conclusions emphasize the need for EU member states to undertake action to accelerate the transition from institutional to community-based care to ensure that all citizens, including persons with disabilities, are able to enjoy their rights.

In terms of developments at the national level, **Benin** and **Senegal** adopted laws on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, **the Gambia** drafted a Disability Bill and the Government of **Guinea** is reviewing a draft law on the protection of persons living with disabilities. Four **Nigerian** states adopted legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities and the **Republic of Moldova** approved a new framework for disability determination, which is in compliance with international standards.

Some progress was achieved in the development of national action plans, policies and strategies on disability in **Serbia, South Africa** and **Uganda**. Furthermore, in **Ethiopia**, the National Committee in charge of implementing the CRPD launched a disability inclusion guide for trade unions.

## Ending discrimination against minorities

With regard to the rights of the Roma population, the Government of **Serbia** made significant progress on their inclusion through the adoption of the Law on Housing, which is in line with human rights standards.

## Xenia wants to go to school

As a result of Xenia's determination, the efforts of her doctors and the perseverance and support of her parents, Xenia can now speak, perfectly coordinate her hand movements and she hopes that one day she will be able to walk. Tatiana, Xenia's mother, cannot even imagine their lives any other way. In fact, she believes that her daughter will get a good education and will succeed in life. Yet, this was not always the case. Until recently, Tatiana did not dare to dream of this. Tatiana participated in trainings organized by UN Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova which aims to encourage persons with disabilities and their families to protect their rights and helps them to realize their right to a life of dignity and well-being.

"I am so grateful for these trainings. Now I know plenty of things that are useful for my child and for other children. I want to thank you for opening my eyes and showing me the way to move forward. We need this support in order to know what to do and where to go," Tatiana said.

Xenia will soon turn six, but she likes telling everyone that she is four years old. Xenia, or Xiusha (as her parents call her), is a cheerful and positive girl, with wisdom in her eyes. When asked about kindergarten, she doesn't know what to say, but she definitely knows she wants to go to school.

Xenia was born prematurely, at only 27 weeks. When she was eight days old, doctors delivered a harsh verdict. Because of cerebral palsy, she would never be able to walk or talk. The first two years of her life were very difficult. The family constantly travelled back and forth

from their small village of Butor, in the Grigoriopol district on the left bank of the Nistru River, to pediatric hospitals in Chisinau and sometimes to those in Moscow.

Xenia never went to kindergarten. The public school system rejected the girl, condemning her to remain isolated at home, despite the fact that she does talk, is sociable and eager to communicate with other children. But, the concept of inclusive education does not exist on the left side of the Nistru River and almost all the children with disabilities are prohibited from participating in mainstream schools. Instead, they are placed in specialized institutions or forced to remain at home.

Before joining the programme run by UN Human Rights, Tatiana did not know that things could be different. When the kindergarten prevented her from staying with Xenia for a few hours per day, she did not know she had the right to insist, since this situation was quite common in their community. She didn't know that Xenia's fundamental right to quality education on an equal basis with other children, without segregation and marginalization, was being violated.

According to statistics, approximately 21,000 persons with disabilities live on the left bank of the Nistru River. Most are socially excluded and, having been largely deprived of their rights to education, labour, health and family, are entirely dependent on others. With the help of UN Human Rights, some are learning about their rights to be better able to claim their rights. Maybe now that Xenia's mother is better informed, Xenia's dream of going to school with other children will one day come true.



Young people from various ethnic and linguistic groups of the Republic of Moldova participate at the first summer school on minority rights. © OHCHR/Republic of Moldova

## Ending discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation

The UN Free & Equal campaign reached people the world over through the website, social and traditional media, videos, fact sheets and other digital content. In September, UN Human Rights launched a set of global standards to support the business community in tackling discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons in the workplace. The new standards, which offer practical guidance to companies, were launched at events, held in late 2017 and early 2018, in New York, Mumbai, London, Paris, Geneva, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Melbourne, Nairobi and Sao Paulo. To date, approximately 50 global brands have signalled their support for the standards, including Adidas, Burberry, the Coca-Cola Company, Deutsche Bank, Dow Chemicals, Google, the IKEA Group, Intel, Microsoft, Ralph Lauren Corp., Twitter and Virgin.

At the local level, the Government of **Iraq**'s Committee on LGBTI issues began drafting a report that examines the current state of the LGBTI community in the country.

## Ending health-related discrimination

In **Malawi**, the HIV and AIDS (Management and Control) Bill was adopted by the Parliament, in November, addressing a number of concerns raised by UN Human Rights. In **Jamaica**, the National Family Planning Board produced a policy brief, entitled *Recommendations to address discrimination based on health status with a particular focus on HIV and HIV-sensitive social protection*, which is being used in advocacy efforts with the Parliament and government entities.

At the global level, the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee prepared a report on the implementation of the principles and guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members. The report contains practical suggestions for the wider dissemination and more effective implementation of principles and guidelines to eliminate discrimination and the stigma associated with leprosy. Subsequently, the Council adopted a resolution (A/HRC/35/9), which called for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members.



UN Human Rights staff member Toiko Tonisson Kleppe holding a banner against homophobia at the photo booth set up by the UN Free & Equal campaign during the 69th Session of the General Assembly in New York, September 2014. Toiko joined the UN Human Rights Office in New York in 2012 and, in 2015, moved to the Regional Office for the Pacific where she worked until August 2016. She passed away on 29 July 2017, after a brave battle with cancer. © The Bosco

## Participation

In **Guatemala**, the results achieved through the Maya Programme contributed to strengthening the knowledge and capacities of indigenous peoples to claim their rights before the judiciary. For example, the litigation of one case led to the establishment of a State policy that recognizes traditional territories within protected areas. In another case, indigenous communal property rights were recognized in relation to over 4,000 hectares that a Maya-Kaqchikel community has occupied since pre-Columbian times. Finally, the Supreme Court urged the Congress to legislate a norm that would recognize indigenous community radio.

In **Timor-Leste**, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons were provided opportunities to increase their knowledge of human rights standards, including the protection mechanisms that exist at the national and international levels. In some instances, individuals submitted claims regarding alleged violations of their

rights to national protection mechanisms, such as the police and the Office of the Prosecutor. In addition, some were also involved in coalitions of NGOs that submitted alternative reports to the Committees of CAT, CEDAW and CRC and to the UPR between 2015 and 2017.

The National Human Rights Commission of **Nigeria** improved its complaints handling system to enhance access to discriminated groups. As a result, the Commission received 90,000 complaints in 2017 as opposed to less than 22,000 in 2012. In **South Sudan**, the National Dialogue and the sensitization activities organized by the Technical Committee for the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing promoted the participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in the national consultations.

Additionally, the 2017 edition of the UN Human Rights Minorities and Indigenous Fellowship Programmes helped 48 advocates from 46 minority and indigenous communities to learn about the international human rights machinery and reinforce their international advo-

cacy skills. Many of the fellows subsequently claimed and advocated for their rights in national, regional and international human rights mechanisms.

### Engagement by the international community

In 2017, there were unprecedented large-scale displacements of women, men and children in countries across the globe, contributing to a larger number of refugees and migrants. In the Asia-Pacific region, the human rights system gave significant attention to the human rights situation of the Rohingya people crossing borders to escape persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State and to the impact of the migration policies of receiving countries. Migration policy remained at the top of the agendas of the EU and its member states. Various EU institutions issued a variety of policy documents to address the numbers of individuals arriving in Europe. While EU migration policies and practices, such as those relating to the Central Mediterranean and the adoption of informal readmission agreements,

## The abuelas of Sepur Zarco: Over 30 years of fighting for justice for the survivors of sexual violence during Guatemala's civil war

The actions of 15 Mayan Q'eqch'í women, called the Sepur Zarco Grandmothers, broke more than 30 years of silence and became an example to the world by demonstrating that access to justice can be achieved for the gravest violations of women's rights.

In Q'eqch'í, the native language of the members of the Sepur Zarco community in eastern Guatemala, there are four words to refer to sexual violence. "Muxuk," meaning that a woman has been "desecrated" and that her life has been totally torn apart, is the word that 11 women chose to describe what they were subjected to between 1982 and 1988 at a military base just outside of their village. At the height of Guatemala's 36-year civil war, which left over 200,000 people dead, the women of Sepur Zarco underwent systematic rape and sexual slavery. They were also used as domestic servants by the Guatemalan military. Meanwhile, their husbands and children were forcibly disappeared, tortured and killed. To this day, their whereabouts are only partially known.

In February 2016, after more than 30 years of fighting for truth, justice and reparations, the grandmothers of Sepur Zarco, as they are respectfully called, finally faced their

tormentors in a courtroom in Guatemala City and were given the opportunity to speak. On the twenty-second day of the trial, the judge handed down a groundbreaking sentence of 120 and 240 years of imprisonment for two military officers, respectively. For the first time in Guatemala, a national court ruled on charges of sexual slavery during an armed conflict, qualifying them as crimes against humanity. Moreover, the court instituted the concept of transformative reparations and emphasized that it was the context of social exclusion in which the community lived, including the past denials of their rights to health, education, land and political participation, which had furthered the systematic violations of human rights. Hence, the judge ordered that reparations focus on the empowerment of both the direct victims of abuses and of the community as a whole.

Through the Maya Programme, UN Human Rights supported the Sepur Zarco women and provided legal advice to the organizations fighting for their cause over many years. The Office also facilitated dialogue between the community and the State actors mandated to implement the reparation measures decided by the court.



The High Commissioner attends a traditional Maya ceremony during his meeting with indigenous communities in Sololá, Guatemala.  
© OHCHR/Guatemala

remained problematic from a human rights perspective, some progress was made by the Directorate-General for Home Affairs and Migration and the European External Action Service in the integration of a comprehensive, rights-based approach into policies on migra-

tion. The Human Rights Council continued to address the issue of migrants in vulnerable situations and civil society actors at the international and regional levels consistently made reference to the work of UN Human Rights in advocating for the human rights of migrants.

## Working for the human rights of migrants

UN Human Rights, in accordance with the mandate of the High Commissioner, is the lead actor within the UN System on the human rights of migrants.

In the context of intergovernmental processes, the Office cooperated with relevant human rights mechanisms to play an active role in the consultation phase of the Global Compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, including by providing support to all six thematic sessions and intervening in the informal sessions to highlight the human rights aspects of migration. UN Human Rights ensured that the voices of civil society, human rights defenders and migrants themselves were heard during the sessions by organizing side events. Moreover, UN Human Rights actively participated in the parallel process to develop a Global Compact for Refugees, taking part in all six thematic discussions as well as the UNHCR High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection on 12-13 December 2017.

The Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue on the human rights of migrants in the context of large movements, a debate on racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration and a panel discussion on unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents. At its thirty-sixth session, the Council considered a compendium of principles, good practices and policies on safe, orderly and regular migration in line with international human rights law, which was presented by UN Human Rights to support the process for developing a human rights-based Global Compact. The Office led the development of a set of principles and guidelines on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations. These are designed to assist States to address the situation of migrants who do not qualify as refugees, yet are in need of the protection of the international human rights framework.

In addition, in October, the Human Rights Council held an intersessional panel discussion on human rights, climate change, migrants and persons displaced across international borders. Prior to this panel, UN Human Rights organized an expert meeting on migration and human rights in the context of slow onset climate change in order to explore the intersections between slow onset climate change events, international migration and the protection of human rights of people on the move. The Office further supported the normative development of migration issues, including through its expert support to the human rights mechanisms. Several mechanisms, including the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on torture, the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Committee against Torture focused their work on issues related to migration. In November and December, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Migrant Workers developed two



UN Human Rights staff member speaking to returnee migrants in Guatemala. © OHCHR/Central America

joint general comments on the human rights of children in the context of international migration.

UN Human Rights sustained its efforts to reframe the often toxic public narrative on migrants and migration. In May, the Office held a multi-stakeholder workshop bringing together 50 experts from the media, the private sector, cities and local governments, NGOs and the UN system, faith communities, documentary filmmakers and creative artists to develop partnerships and skills on promoting inclusion and on confronting anti-migrant narratives. On International Migrants' Day, 18 December, the Office launched a series of animated videos featuring stories and conversations with and about migrants and their communities, which were widely shared through social media.

The Office also monitored and documented the human rights situation of migrants along key migratory routes. In September, a technical assistance and monitoring mission was sent to El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. They found critical issues associated with immigration detention and protection gaps facing migrants in vulnerable situations. In 2017, the Office published *In Search of Dignity: Report on the human rights of migrants at Europe's borders*, based on monitoring missions carried out to border and transit locations in Europe in late 2016. The report details common concerns identified in the countries visited and it charts possible ways forward. In collaboration with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, UN Human Rights published a joint report, entitled *Detained and Dehumanized: Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya*. In West Africa, UN Human Rights and UNODC developed a joint project to address human rights violations related to irregular migration, focusing on Mali, Niger and Senegal. In Tunisia, the Office launched a project on strengthening migration governance and enhancing human rights at borders. It supported national authorities in developing a plan of action for the review of regulations to ensure the protection of migrant workers. UN Human Rights also monitored the Australian off shore Regional Processing Centre in Manus, Papua New Guinea, and conducted related advocacy with relevant counterparts.



Human rights officer conducts a monitoring visit to a detention centre in Mali. © MINUSMA/Sylvain Liechti

## Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law

*A total of 56 per cent of national expected accomplishments were fully or partially achieved over the last four years, with varying levels of progress achieved in those that are remaining.*

### Compliance of national laws, policies and institutions

#### Administration of justice

A number of countries made progress in terms of the drafting, review and adoption of legislation or policies to enable the judiciary to hand down decisions in compliance with human rights standards. For instance, in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the Justice Reform Plan was approved, in May, which included several recommendations issued by UN Human Rights, such as the reinforcement of international judicial cooperation,

the adoption of a national prosecution strategy for international crimes, the abolition of the death penalty and the adoption of a law on the protection of witnesses and victims. The corresponding action plan is expected to be finalized in 2018. In **Guinea**, the Military Justice Code, first adopted in 2013, was revised in 2017 to take into account the fundamental principles of criminal law, such as the principle of dual jurisdiction. In **Kyrgyzstan**, a number of changes were introduced to the draft Criminal Procedure Code, adopted in February, to align it with international human rights standards. In **Tunisia**, a practical guide was launched on the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights, which addresses the modalities of litigation of these rights in the country, in accordance with relevant international standards.

With regard to the functioning of judicial institutions, the Special Criminal Court in the **Central African Republic** appointed magistrates to lead investigation and prosecution activities and develop strategies for prosecution and the protection of witnesses and victims. Furthermore, the mapping report issued by UN Human Rights, which documented 620 cases of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that were committed between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2015, proposed priority areas for future investigations by the Special Criminal Court. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, 25 mobile courts were deployed to

prosecute alleged perpetrators of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including sexual violence. As a result, at least 132 soldiers from the armed forces, 45 police agents and 21 members of militias or armed groups were convicted for their involvement in human rights violations or abuses. In **Guatemala**, sentences handed down by judges and magistrates were based increasingly on international human rights standards. This was particularly evident in decisions regarding transitional justice, indigenous peoples, women and the abusive application of criminal charges against human rights defenders. For example, in the emblematic Sepur Zarco Case, the Court condemned two army officers for crimes against humanity that were committed during the armed conflict in the form of sexual violence, murder and enforced disappearance. Moreover, a policy on access to justice for indigenous peoples was approved by the Attorney General, which subsequently created the position of Secretary for Indigenous Peoples to ensure its implementation.

### Ending torture and ill-treatment

In a number of countries, important legislative changes were adopted to prevent torture and ill-treatment. In **Georgia**, the Parliament introduced amendments to existing legislation, including severe punishment for crimes of torture or inhuman treatment, the repeal of

the statute of limitations for these crimes, the identification of procedural guarantees for detained individuals and addressed gaps in legislation and bylaws that enable law enforcement agencies to act arbitrarily, thereby increasing the potential risk for ill-treatment. In **Nigeria**, the Anti-Torture Act and the Compulsory Treatment and Care for Victims of Gunshot Act were approved. The former introduces comprehensive provisions for penalizing torture and related acts while the latter prohibits use of any form of torture or inhuman treatment by a public official.

### Ending the death penalty

UN Human Rights continued to provide technical assistance to, and sustained advocacy with, States retaining the death penalty. The purpose was to encourage establishment of moratoria in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/176 and for the implementation of international standards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty. Several letters were sent by the High Commissioner to governments currently applying the death penalty, requesting stays of execution or commutations of the death sentences.

In **Barbados**, a two-day discussion was organized with scholars, judges, lawyers and other experts on public

## A young man's appeal for justice after acquittal

In 2016, a 16-year-old construction worker named Paoskha (not his real name) was arrested by the police in Cambodia. After spending three days at the police station without being informed of the charges against him, he was taken to court where he was told that he had been convicted in absentia. He was able to contest that judgment thanks to the help of a court clerk who explained to him what a 'default judgment' was and how to ask for a retrial.

During his initial detention, Paoskha was unaware of his rights. He did not know that he had the right to be informed of the charges against him at the time of his arrest, the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, the right to be tried in his presence and to a legal defence, as well as the right to communicate with his family.

Paoskha was represented by a court-appointed lawyer and was acquitted at his new trial. However, the Prosecutor appealed the decision. In line with Cambodia's criminal procedure, Paoskha had to remain in prison until the appeal ruling. With support from UN Human Rights, the legal aid organization International Bridges to Justice (IBJ) took up his case. The IBJ lawyer met with Paoskha and his

family before the appeal hearing in order to gather sufficient evidence to uphold his acquittal. Through his family, the lawyer discovered that Paoskha has a unique nickname and that his arrest was in fact a case of mistaken identity. This information formed the basis of his defence.

Nearly one year after his arrest, the Court of Appeal acquitted Paoskha. Although administrative issues delayed his release for another three weeks, the smile on his face when he walked out of prison on 14 July 2017, expressed his relief at finally being cleared of all charges and free to return to his life. Nevertheless, the difficult year spent in prison had significant consequences for him and for his relatives. He was thankful to IBJ for explaining the legal process to his family and for providing him with legal assistance.

Based on its monitoring work, its cooperation with the justice system and its partnerships with legal aid organizations, UN Human Rights has identified numerous cases where fair trial rights and freedom from arbitrary detention were not adequately protected. It works closely with judges, prosecutors, prisons and lawyers to ensure the increased protection of these rights.

opinion around the death penalty as part of ongoing advocacy regarding its abolition. Advocacy with **Iran** contributed to the adoption of amendments, in November, reducing the scope of the application of the death penalty for some drug-related offences. In the **Maldives**, following an announcement by the President that executions would resume, contact with authorities increased in an effort to dissuade abandonment of the Government's moratorium on the death penalty.

In **Papua New Guinea**, although the Government announced in 2013 that it was widening the scope of the death penalty to include cases of aggravated robbery and killings related to sorcery accusation, no judge has handed down a death sentence since then. Moreover, at the end of the year, a judge of the National Court issued a stay of execution in relation to all persons on death row, based on a judicial inquiry that found that some of their constitutional rights had not been fully respected. Some progress was achieved in **Somalia** as 74 people who had been sentenced to death had their sentences commuted to terms of confinement. The Government of **Thailand** demonstrated its commitment to work towards abolishing the death penalty. It has not carried out a death sentence since 2009.

At a 2014 Continental Conference on the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Africa, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights urged African Union (AU) member states to observe a moratorium on the death penalty and consider its abolition. It also developed a draft Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Nevertheless, at the initiative of some member states and the AU Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, the adoption of the draft Additional Protocol was suspended in 2016 and no further progress has been made.

### Training of the judiciary and security forces

Various capacity-building activities and technical advice facilitated by UN Human Rights were aimed at helping increase judiciary's and security forces' knowledge of human rights concepts and methodologies, particularly in regards to the administration of justice, non-discrimination and human rights in policing.

In **Eritrea**, approximately 70 representatives from the judiciary, the prosecution, the police and correctional personnel participated in workshops facilitated by UN Human Rights on the human rights aspects of the administration of justice, such as the independence of the judiciary, the protection of persons deprived of their liberty, the right to a fair trial and the rights of persons in situations of vulnerability. In **Serbia**, following

four training workshops on relevant international human rights standards attended by almost 100 judges, a manual was developed on the application of international human rights law. In **Uganda**, UN Human Rights developed and contributed to the implementation of a curriculum for the training of judges of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the High Court. As a result of the increased capacity of the judiciary, a landmark judgment was handed down by the Uganda Supreme Court, in 2015, which opened doors to litigation of economic, social and cultural rights, and culminated with another ground-breaking judgement, in 2017, that held that the State was obliged to protect the right to health and was accountable for the failure to protect this right in cases where mothers had lost their lives when giving birth.

In relation to the capacity-building of security forces, in **Djibouti**, the National Human Rights Commission drafted a human rights manual for the police, which is in compliance with international human rights standards. A human rights training programme was developed for the Defence and Security Forces of **Guinea**, while the **Liberia** Immigration Service, national police and armed forces integrated human rights monitoring and training into their operational mechanisms. The Police Academy of **Cambodia** organized three successive training sessions through which 183 prison staff members were trained on prison management, legislation, human rights and the prevention of torture. In **Tunisia**, the capacity of 3,600 law enforcement officers from the police, national guard and civil protection service was strengthened through training sessions on human rights in policing. A module on human rights was included in the curriculum of the National Police School.

In **Fiji**, a pilot human rights training course for the police was implemented in 2017, resulting in the training of 257 police recruits. Following the delivery of a human rights seminar for police senior management, a task force was set up to support the police in their efforts to harmonize operational directives, processes and procedures with human rights principles. In **Timor-Leste**, human rights training programmes were established for the police, in 2014, and for the military, in 2017. The training on human rights for police was integrated into the curriculum for police recruits and was used to train in-service officers throughout the country. Additionally, training manuals were developed for and implemented by both law enforcement bodies.

At the global level, in cooperation with UNDP and the International Centre for Drug Policy and Human Rights, UN Human Rights contributed to the drafting of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Control, which will provide guidance to States and other stakeholders on this subject.

## Human rights indicators

Human rights indicators were developed and implemented in various States to measure progress made by the judiciary in the protection of a number of rights. In particular, in **Mexico**, the Federal Judicial Council, the Supreme Court of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Public Security of the Federal District, the Federal District Prosecutor's Office, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Institute of Statistics and Geography were involved in the elaboration of indicators focused on the rights to health, a fair trial, life, liberty and security of the person and the human rights of prisoners. Moreover, in Mexico City, the Ministry of Public Security and the Sub-Secretary of the Penitentiary System developed an accountability framework for the police that is based on a set of human rights indicators on the rights to life, liberty, security, personal integrity and the prohibition of torture. In **Paraguay**, a set of human rights indicators on persons with disabilities were developed, in October, with the active participation of civil society actors.

## Access to justice and reparations

With regard to reparations, the Government of **Kenya** made good progress in the development of guidelines and a policy on reparations to victims of gross human rights violations, with a particular focus on sexual violence. The draft guidelines were reviewed at a national victims' convention and were subsequently submitted to the Attorney General for adoption. In order to facilitate access to justice for individuals and groups

in vulnerable situations in **Mauritania**, the effective implementation of the Law on Legal Aid, first adopted in 2015, was advanced following the approval of two decrees. The first decree, passed in February, focuses on the establishment of regional offices while the second one, adopted in November, establishes the rates for lawyers and experts.

## Protection systems and accountability mechanisms

### Transitional justice and accountability

Significant progress was achieved in some countries in the establishment and functioning of transitional justice and accountability mechanisms.

In May 2017, a mapping report was released on the **Central African Republic**, documenting serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed between 2003 and 2015 by Government forces, various local and foreign armed groups and international and foreign defence forces. The report provides an important factual basis for transitional justice processes, including for vetting and truth seeking mechanisms. In September, a Steering Committee was set up under a presidential decree to lead the establishment of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission and carry out national consultations to help foster local ownership. In **the Gambia**, a bill establishing the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission was adopted by the National As-



The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights launches the United Nations Mapping Report documenting serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that were committed in the Central African Republic between 2003 and 2015, May 2017. © MINUSCA



UN Human Rights supports the national consultations for the establishment of a Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission in The Gambia. © OHCHR/West Africa

sembly, while in **Guinea**, a draft law on the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is expected to be adopted in 2018. The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission of **Mali** began the process of taking depositions, while the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission of **Sudan** developed an action plan to improve the discharge of its mandate. Moreover, in February, the National Reconciliation Law of **Madagascar** was promulgated and the **Zimbabwean** National Peace Reconciliation Commission Bill was amended

and adopted. Some concerns remain, however, regarding its alignment with international standards on transitional justice mechanisms. In **South Sudan**, a Technical Committee was established by the Ministry of Justice to implement a national consultation process that will inform the drafting of legislation on the establishment of a truth commission. At the regional level, in Africa, in spite of the consultations that have been carried out since 2013, the AU Transitional Justice Policy Framework has not yet been adopted.

## Legal efforts to defend the rights of women in Tunisia

On 26 July 2017, Tunisia consolidated its leading position in the Middle East and North Africa region in the field of women's rights through the Parliament's adoption of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The law is a landmark achievement that provides for the prevention of and protection from violence against women and girls and ensures that victims of violence receive adequate care and have access to justice. The Law aligns Tunisian legislation with the Constitution and with recommendations issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The unanimous adoption of the Law resulted from the patient efforts of civil society, UN Human Rights and other international organizations to develop a unifying draft law and an effective awareness-raising and advocacy campaign.

These efforts began in earnest in 2012 when the Secretary of State for Women and Family Affairs reactivated and updated the "National Strategy against Violence against Women through their Life Cycle." A National Commission on Combating Violence against Women was also created in 2012, tasked with developing a road map for action and establishing a committee of multidisciplinary experts to draft a comprehensive law. A participatory and inclusive approach was adopted during the drafting process. Workshops were organized that brought together different actors from all regions of the country. Changes in the Government, in 2015, delayed the drafting process. In 2016, following strong advocacy by the UN and other

international partners, the process was re-launched and a second version of the draft was prepared. In July 2016, the draft was approved by the Council of Ministers and subsequently submitted to the Tunisian Parliament. The adoption of the Law, on 26 July 2017, came one year after the draft was presented to the Parliament.

This historic legislation completes a set of progressive legal provisions on women's rights in Tunisia and gives effect to article 46(4) of the 2014 Constitution in line with international human rights conventions. The new law contains numerous positive elements, including a definition of rape in line with international standards, the creation of new offences, such as 'incest,' which was not previously included in the Criminal Code, and the raising of the minimum age for sexual consent from 13 to 16 years of age. The Law further considers gender-based violence as a public order offence, therefore allowing for the prosecution of an accused person, even if a victim withdraws the complaint. It also establishes a new police corps that is responsible for dealing with cases of gender-based violence.

The adoption of the Law on Violence against Women is a landmark in Tunisia's democratic transition. The commitment and perseverance demonstrated by Tunisian civil society and the authorities to secure adoption of the Law should now be channelled towards its effective implementation so that that the Law can help tangibly improve the lives of millions of women and girls in Tunisia.



UN Human Rights facilitates an expert discussion on the draft Law establishing the National Specialized Court for Most Serious Crimes in Iraq.  
© UNAMI PIO

In the Americas, the commissioners of the Truth Commission of **Bolivia**, created in 2016, were appointed in August. In **Colombia**, efforts continued for the establishment of judicial and non-judicial mechanisms to deal with serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that were committed during the armed conflict. The Special Indigenous Jurisdiction received official recognition in accordance with international law.

In Asia, all of the 34 provincial road maps for peace were completed as part of the **Afghan** People's Dialogue on Peace. In addition, the Government of **Sri Lanka** continued working on the implementation of its transitional justice agenda, which includes the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an Office for Missing Persons, a reparations programme and a special accountability mechanism with a special counsel and the participation of foreign judges. National consultations to discuss these mechanisms were held in 2016 and, in January 2017, an outcome report was finalized. In 2016, the Government adopted legislation to establish an Office of Missing Persons, which was operationalized in 2017. It is anticipated that the newly established office will start working in 2018. While the legislation for a truth and reconciliation commission and a reparations programme has been drafted, it has not yet been publicly discussed or adopted.

In the Middle East and North Africa region, a draft law for the creation of a specialized court for the most serious crimes in **Iraq** has been finalized and disseminated for consideration, in full compliance with international principles. In **Libya**, although no general transitional justice mechanism has been established, a milestone was reached during the Tawergha-Misrata transitional justice process when, in 2016, an agreement was signed between these communities, addressing issues of truth-seeking, justice, reparations and reconciliation. The National Commission of Inquiry on **Yemen** issued two interim reports, reportedly documented more than 17,000 human rights violations and completed investigations of more than 10,000 allegations.

## National Preventive Mechanisms

Some achievements were recorded in relation to the establishment and strengthening of National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs). In **Cambodia**, although the NPM still falls short of OP-CAT requirements, there have been improvements in relation to the nomination and independence of its new members. Efforts were undertaken by **Indonesia** to strengthen its recently created NPM for monitoring places of detention. In **Tunisia**, the NPM adopted rules of procedure and a 2017-2021 plan of action. It also undertook a series of outreach activities across the country to engage with civil society organizations to ensure that they understand the role of the NPM. The NPM of **Ukraine** carried out regular visits to places of detention, thereby strengthening human rights protection for detainees.

## Engagement by the international community

Throughout the year, the High Commissioner advocated for the increased responsiveness of the international community to ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses and other international crimes. In particular, the High Commissioner renewed calls for accountability for human rights violations committed in **Syria**. Consequently, the international community has taken steps to address the prevailing situation of impunity by establishing two distinct and complementary entities. The mandate of the International Independent Commission of Inquiry, established in 2011, has been renewed by the Human Rights Council. Additionally, in December 2016, the General Assembly decided to establish the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. In 2017, the Mechanism began to collect and analyse evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses that have been committed in Syria since 2011.

## Integrating human rights in development and in the economic sphere

*A total of 78 per cent of national expected accomplishments were fully or partially achieved over the last four years, with varying levels of progress achieved in those that are remaining.*

### Compliance of national laws, policies and institutions

In **Kenya**, a Government-led Steering Committee is developing an Action Plan and Policy on Human Rights and Business, while in **Madagascar**, a Tripartite Charter was developed with representatives of civil society, the Government and mining companies to promote the principles of participation, transparency and accountability in law and policymaking and to ensure that the Government's general policy and sector-based policies incorporate a human rights-based approach. A number of activities were also implemented in **Mozambique** to support the development of a national action plan on business and human rights, including the development of a national baseline assessment and the establishment of a national coordination mechanism, composed of governmental entities, civil society organizations and business enterprises. In **Somalia**, the Federal Government included its human rights commitments among the priorities of the country's first National Development Plan since 1986.

The Administrative Department for Social Prosperity in **Colombia** increasingly applied standards of economic, social and cultural rights in poverty eradication programmes and other programmes related to the right to food and water in La Guajira. In **Guatemala**, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources committed to developing a guidance document for consultation with indigenous peoples during the initial phase of environmental impact studies related to the exploitation of natural resources. In addition, the Presidential Coordinating Commission on Human Rights expressed its intention to develop a policy on business and human rights. The Government of **Chile** developed and launched a National Plan on Business and Human Rights. The Secretariat for Social Action of **Paraguay** designed a set of human rights indicators related to poverty, economic, social and cultural rights and social protection. These were linked to both the Sustainable Development Goals and the social programmes implemented by the Secretariat. The NHRI of **Peru** adopted a strategy for the monitoring of cases

of human rights violations in the context of business activities.

Land legislation was adopted in **Timor-Leste**, enabling the determination of the ownership of land for the first time in the country's history and guaranteeing that all Timorese people have a right to ownership. The legislation includes a specific provision in relation to vulnerable groups to guarantee "adequate information for consultation with and participation of these groups, in a way that promotes the right to equality and non-discrimination." The new Law requires that when evictions are carried out, they guarantee the dignity of human beings, the rights and safety of affected persons and respect for the principles of proportionality, appropriateness and non-discrimination. In **Tunisia**, the 2017-2020 Action Plan on the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls in Rural Areas was drafted and adopted, in August 2017.

### Conflict resolution and integration of human rights principles into business operations

At the global level, in follow-up to Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/32/10, the Office convened two expert workshops on the interface between human rights due diligence and standards for legal liability and how best to ensure that the prosecution of companies involved with human rights abuse is effective. These discussions enhanced the understanding of States about their obligations to provide an effective remedy to victims of corporate-related human rights abuses and contributed to increased attention being paid to accessing remedy. The workshops also fed into some of the normative and practical discussions that took place during the 2017 Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights, which focused on challenges faced and progress made on increasing the effectiveness of domestic public law regimes in terms of access to remedy.

At the country level, the **Ethiopian** Human Rights Commission conducted monitoring missions to five of the country's regions to evaluate the human rights implications of a resettlement programme in connection with the Government's concession of lands for commercial agriculture. The Commission investigated various aspects of the programme, such as the degree of consultation, consent and appropriate compensation in light of applicable international human rights principles and proposed correctional measures, and published its findings. **Guinea** put in place procedures for contracting mining companies whereby the rights of the residents of the mining areas are taken into account in natural resource exploitation projects.

## Lead poisoning on Kenya's coast: A poor community fights back

Crumpled plastic and torn cardboard litter a hill no larger than a small garden. “Where is Victor?” asks Phyllis Omido, her eyes scanning the enclosure. “Where is he?” The last time she visited, one-year-old Victor Odhiambo had just died of lead poisoning. His grave was fresh, visible in the tiny parched square locals call the “vegetable patch.”

Now, the site is strewn with refuse, sweltering under coastal Kenya's equatorial sun. Victor lies somewhere below, with the remains of other children who, like him, should still be alive and who, like him, have no grave to their name. “When the patch is full, we just start again at the beginning,” said Phyllis. “We bury the children on top of one another. Otherwise there is no room.”

Phyllis is an environmental activist locked in a battle over toxic pollution that is pitting the impoverished community of Owino Uhuru, in Mombasa, against the government and big business.

No one among the community's 5,000 residents doubts why the children died: The community believes that they were poisoned by lead from an adjacent smelter and battery recycling plant that operated with impunity for more than seven years — and without the mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment — until it was finally forced to shut down in 2014.

The damage inflicted during those seven years is still visible. In this poor shantytown, many of whose residents live on a dollar a day, many children are still to be

tested for lead poisoning; few of those who have been are receiving medical treatment; while homes and water sources are still contaminated from the toxic dust that once floated overhead.

Phyllis was once a well-paid administrator and community liaison officer in the very plant responsible for polluting Owino Uhuru. She had a car, free fuel, and enough money to care for the one-year-old son whom she was raising as a single mother. When she couldn't find a babysitter, she brought her infant son to work, taking the occasional break to breastfeed him. Within a month, her son began to cough. He developed a fever and diarrhea and cried all the time, something he had never done previously. A government official eventually suggested he be tested for lead poisoning. The test came back positive.

After her son spent a month in hospital, Phyllis called on the company to be shut down. When they refused, she quit her job, fearing her own exposure to lead from the smelter had also contaminated her child. Management did, after all, wear full protective gear when visiting the plant — unlike the workers, who were lucky to get even a pair of gloves.

She knew mothers in Owino Uhuru were falling ill and miscarrying, and that children too were dying. Phyllis tried to raise the alarm but in vain: she had insufficient proof. So she tested sick children at her own expense. The results were as she predicted: all suffered from lead poisoning.



Phyllis showing the community Owino Uhuru in Mombasa. © OHCHR/Axel Fassio

*(cont.)*

Phyllis contacted environmental, business, economic and health authorities, again to no avail. Owino Uhuru, after all, was a marginal community, while the metal company – and its powerful owners and allies – was part of a massive economic effort to industrialize Kenya’s coast.

Yet along Owino Uhuru’s dirt-packed streets, the stories continued to tumble forth. A young woman with a visibly damaged thyroid acknowledged she would probably die soon. Another young woman had miscarried three times – until she finally died in childbirth. Her infant son was born with lead poisoning. Standing in a doorway wearing his smart green school uniform, a curly-haired little boy thrust out his arm: his skin was scaly and falling off in patches.

As stories of illness and loss accumulated, Phyllis’s energy turned to anger and she made her boldest move: she decided to sue. “We need medicines for our children, we need the village to be cleaned up, and we want compensation,” said Phyllis.

To give her fight greater legitimacy, Phyllis founded the Centre for Justice, Governance and Environmental Action (CJEA), an environmental grassroots group that advocates for the rights of communities poisoned by toxic chemicals from Kenya’s extractive industries. Along with the residents of Owino Uhuru, she launched a class action suit against the Kenyan government. “They should never have allowed this smelter to operate right where people live,” she said.

The more Phyllis investigated, the more she became a target. She was beaten. She was attacked outside her house. She was followed. Her life was threatened. She was even arrested. “I live under constant threat,” she said. “I hide and don’t even visit my family because it would put them in danger. I change vehicles, and I vary my routes to work.”

UN Human Rights heard of her fight and offered to help as part of its mandate to support implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and protect civic space. In addition to supporting the litigation case, UN Human Rights have provided a bridge with the Kenya authorities to urge protection of CJEA and members of the Owino Uhuru community when they came under threat. “The UN has made it possible for us to be heard,” Phyllis said. “Before, we had been ignored. Working with UN Human Rights led government officials to take us seriously and pay attention.”

Another major turning point was a press release in early 2017 by the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, which called publicly on Kenya to pro-



A little boy of the Owino Uhuru community suffers the sequels of lead poisoning. © OHCHR/Axel Fassio

tect Phyllis and three of her coworkers who had been assaulted, threatened and forced into hiding as a result of the court case. “Now, many voices are speaking out about Owino Uhuru. Our profile is higher, we are safer, and we are grateful,” Phyllis said.

Extensive campaigning by the CJEA and support from the international community raised the battle’s political profile and prompted government officials to act by making available a series of three confidential reports. The first, in March 2015, called for health and environmental impact assessments and reportedly concluded the company had failed to comply with the law. This was confirmed by a second report. The third and final paper focused on health and apparently found high blood lead levels in the children of Owino Uhuru due to environmental exposure.

The scene was set. The data was in. It was time for court, a costly undertaking made possible by support from UN Human Rights and by the KIOS Foundation.

“Our goal is to challenge the state to enforce the Constitution and the private actors to respect their business and human rights responsibilities, but also to give a voice to those who are systematically not listened to,” Phyllis said.

The landmark litigation is expected to create a precedent for other communities affected by the powerful extractive industries along the coast. By denying com-

(cont.)



Phyllis addresses a community gathering to brief them on the case brought to Court. © OHCHR/Axel Fassio

munities the right to a clean and healthy environment, these industries are likely violating the rights of the people who live near them, rights which are guaranteed by the Kenyan Constitution and its Bill of Rights.

The days of big business operating with environmental impunity may soon be over. The Department of Justice is working with UN Human Rights to craft an action plan on business and human rights that will protect both lo-

cal communities and their environment. With UN Human Rights a member of the steering committee responsible for developing this plan, Kenya is one of the first Governments to take such an initiative in Africa.

It is too late for Victor and the other children who have died. But their families want justice. And Phyllis wants to stop looking over her shoulder each time she twists her house key into the lock.

In **Colombia**, departmental public policies on business and human rights were developed in Antioquia and Magdalena, including for the design of mechanisms for non-judicial remedies. Also, with regard to the integration of human rights principles into business operations, Guías Colombia, a multi-actor initiative created to establish due diligence guidelines, adopted mandatory due diligence standards for the assessment, prevention and mitigation of human rights impacts, both in the operations of its members, contractors and suppliers. An evaluation undertaken in 2017 demonstrated that approximately 60 per cent of the businesses reporting to Guías Colombia made significant progress in the implementation of the guidelines. In addition, the **Honduran** National Association of Industries developed an initiative to promote human rights among their members and created the Industrial Committee on Human Rights.

## Participation

Rights-holders increased their meaningful engagement with the processes that affect their rights. For example, in **Liberia**, the Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform was established to promote the application of a human rights-based approach in public policies. The Human Rights Forum, which is composed of civil society organizations, participated in the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan and advocated with national authorities for the participation of rural dwellers in the management and allocation of the national budget. In **Colombia**, the territorial development plans provided an opportunity to facilitate the engagement of rights-holders in the design of public policies. The Office undertook a number of capacity-building activities with civil society actors to enable them to meaningfully

participate in these processes. For instance, members of the National Human Rights Platform, “La Alianza,” received training on how to formulate municipal and departmental public policies that incorporate a human rights-based approach. The trainings’ participants formed a network to further disseminate this information and achieve more effective participation in the formulation and oversight of public policies.

A consultation mechanism was initiated, in 2016, to enable the participation of indigenous peoples in **Costa Rica**. Eight ethnic groups from 24 indigenous territories across the country are involved. In 2017, after more than 120 meetings and activities throughout the country, a national meeting was held, in May, during which indigenous delegates met with representatives from the Government, the NHRI and UN agencies to discuss a proposal for a prior consultation mechanism. A second national meeting will be held in 2018 to conclude the process.

In **Panama**, a dialogue was held between the Government and indigenous authorities from the Comarca Ngabe-Bugle region to guarantee the participation of indigenous peoples in the decision-making process related to the exploitation of natural resources in

the Barro Blanco hydroelectric project. The dialogue contributed to ending violent confrontations between indigenous peoples and security forces and led to a negotiated agreement which included compensation for the communities affected by the project, as well as measures to reduce its social, economic, cultural and environmental impact. Nonetheless, the General Congress of the Comarca Ngabe-Bugle rejected the agreement and no further progress has been achieved since then.

With regard to the protection of the right to land in **Colombia**, although 122 requests for the protection of territories were presented by indigenous and Afrodescendent authorities during the reporting period, most of these were not processed. The limited realization of the rights to territorial integrity and participation affected the exercise of the autonomy and self-determination of ethnic peoples, thereby increasing their vulnerability. After the peace agreements were signed, new displacements and restrictions to the effective enjoyment of the right to land and territory were generated as a result of disputes over land by new actors involved in drug trafficking in areas that were previously controlled by the FARC-EP guerrillas. In view of this situation, UN Human Rights supported the formulation of protocols for inter-



UN Human Rights participates in a ceremony where Jorng indigenous peoples in Cambodia are handed their indigenous peoples' identity registration, September 2017. © OHCHR/Cambodia

action with third parties in the post-conflict phase and prior, free and informed consultation and consent with 17 indigenous and Afrodescendent communities based in seven regions of the country.

Indigenous representatives in **Cambodia** engaged in consultations on the draft Environmental Code and the draft Law on Agricultural Land Management. Furthermore, indigenous peoples in seven provinces participated in the communal land titling process with various ministries. As a result, six indigenous communities in Koh Kong, Kratie and Mondulkiri provinces were able to obtain their indigenous peoples' identity registration (step one of the communal land titling process). One community in Mondulkiri province obtained its registration as a legal entity (step two of the process) and an indigenous community in Battambang province was able to advance in the demarcation of its lands.

### Engagement by the international community

At the regional level, the African Union developed a draft policy framework on business and human rights that seeks to provide a regional road map on business and human rights in the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human

Rights. It commits to addressing the negative impact of some businesses on the human rights of women, children, the elderly, youth, persons with disabilities and other groups. Through a joint report launched in July 2017, UN Human Rights, with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, worked to create awareness about the human rights impact of the Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. The report analyses the impact on agricultural livelihoods, agro-manufacturing and informal cross-border trade, with a particular emphasis on women and vulnerable groups, such as smallholder farmers. The findings of the report were discussed at a dedicated panel at the World Trade Organization Public Forum, in September.

The international human rights mechanisms raised the international community's awareness regarding the impact of economic measures on the enjoyment of human rights. For instance, the Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights began the process of developing Guiding Principles for assessing the impact on human rights of structural adjustment and austerity measures. A mapping of existing tools used by States and international financial institutions was undertaken to identify existing practices and gaps. In November, an expert meeting was held to propose a framework for the Guiding Principles. The special



The Deputy High Commissioner participates at a panel on human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals hosted by the Permanent Missions of Denmark and Chile, Geneva, December 2017. © OHCHR/Pierre Albouy

## Human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Human rights, including the right to development, are indivisible and they underpin the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its commitment to “leaving no one behind.” In that spirit, UN Human Rights worked to promote the human rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda:

- With UN Women, the Office co-led a process to strengthen the UN development system’s focus on rising inequalities and discrimination in the context of support for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); a commitment clearly reflected in the *United Nations System Shared Framework for Action on Leaving No One Behind*, published by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination in 2017;
- Strengthened UN support for SDG implementation at the country level, including by developing communities of practice and helping to identify and leverage the synergies between the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs and the implementation of and follow-up to human rights recommendations;
- Advocated for implementation of the principle of “leaving no one behind” to include monitoring progress for all groups using disaggregated data and focusing on those being left the furthest behind;
- Worked to empower local actors to explore the linkages between national budgets and international human rights obligations so that States make resources available to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including in the context of SDG implementation;
- Engaged with Multilateral Development Banks and other development finance institutions to encourage integration of human rights information in their assessments and management of social risk for the projects they finance, including through their safeguarding policies and internal due diligence processes;
- Helped integrate human rights into the new UN Development Assistance Framework Guidance Package and the United Nations Development Group’s Guidelines to Support Country Reporting on the SDGs;
- Conducted technical assistance and awareness-raising activities to integrate international human rights norms and standards into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the global, regional, and country levels.
- As the custodian agency of four indicators under SDG Goal 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) and SDG Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels), UN Human Rights developed methodologies for compiling data on the existence of independent national human rights institutions; the killing and other forms of violence against journalists/media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates; the number of conflict-related deaths and the prevalence of discrimination based on prohibited grounds of discrimination under international human rights law.

procedures made several contributions to the SDGs. For example, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities advocated for the collection of data disaggregated by disability for the SDGs, resulting in an increasing number of States supporting this approach and collecting relevant data. The Special Rapporteur on the right to food provided advice on the incorporation of the human right to food in all relevant aspects of Goal 2 on Zero Hunger through her two reports on the right to food and pesticides and in high-level meetings of the Committee on World Food Security.

UN Human Rights helped to ensure that UN development system guidance on SDG implementation and monitoring integrates human rights, including the recommendations of the international human rights mechanisms.

Further, the majority of the SDG indicators are relevant to the realization of many human rights, with these interconnections increasingly recognized as the indicators were developed, including with regards to data

disaggregation. Work has advanced in relation to the compilation of and reporting on the SDG indicators for which UN Human Rights is responsible, including indicators on the prevalence of discrimination, violence against human rights defenders, the existence of NHRIs and conflict-related deaths (not covered by traditional homicide statistics).

UN Human Rights also carried out capacity-building on human rights monitoring in health care settings, supported the increased focus on sexual and reproductive health in the work undertaken by NHRIs and enhanced its engagement with the judiciary on economic, social and cultural rights. The Office and WHO supported the High-Level Working Group on the Health and Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents (HLWG), which was mandated to secure political support for the implementation of the human rights-related actions of the Global Strategy on Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health. The Global Strategy is a key implementing platform for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which emphasizes the role of human rights in

## High-Level Working Group on Health and Human Rights

Convened by UN Human Rights and WHO in 2016, the High-Level Working Group on Health and Human Rights presented its recommendations to the World Health Assembly and the Human Rights Council in 2017. This is the first time that a report has been launched before both bodies.

The report emphasized that the world is at a turning point that could lead to greater dignity for everyone throughout their lives, but only if governments invest in the integral relationship between human rights and health, specifically for women, children and adolescents. “Leadership is fundamental to maximize the benefits of the interplay between health and human rights. If human rights to – and through – health are not at the centre of what we do, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda will surely fail,” said Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and Co-Chair of the Group, at the launch event in May 2017.

The Group also pointed out the unprecedented opportunity for sustainable development with the largest generation of adolescents in the world’s history. To seize this opportunity their rights to and through health must be respected and realized. The Group warned that erosion of – and in some cases a backlash against – human rights worldwide threatens to undermine pro-

gress in the health and well-being of all people. “The realization of human rights in the context of sexual and reproductive health, including access to safe abortion, is not only seriously uneven or unattainable at the country level, it is under direct attack, risking the reversal of hard-won advances in preventable maternal and child mortality and undermining the health of adolescents worldwide,” added Tarja Halonen.

“Many promises have been made but still millions of women, children and adolescents are denied their fundamental human rights, leading to preventable deaths, injury, physical and mental illness and other harm. Despite medical breakthroughs and scientific advances, societies continue to undervalue the health and dignity of women, children and adolescents, undermining their rights and dismissing their rightful claims,” said Hina Jilani, member of the Elders and the Group’s Co-Chair.

UN Human Rights and WHO have committed to taking forward the recommendations of the report, including through the first Framework of Cooperation between the two institutions, which was signed in November 2017. The coordinated work foreseen under this agreement aims to support a holistic approach to health and human rights, including in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



The High Commissioner, the former Director-General of WHO and the Co-Chair of the High-Level Working Group on Health and Human Rights launch the report “Leading the realization of human rights to health and through health.” © WHO

securing improved health outcomes for women, children and adolescents. In May, the HLWG issued a report that included recommendations on the creation of an enabling environment, partnering with people and strengthening evidence and accountability.

## Human rights integrated into UN policies and programmes

UN Human Rights led efforts to mainstream human rights, including the right to development, into the work of the UN at the global and country levels. Through the United Nations Development Group's Human Rights Working Group, 24 human rights advisers were deployed across a number of regions. With their support, and support provided by other UN Human Rights field presences, United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) increased their capacities to apply a human rights-based approach to their United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). As a result, UNDAFs and other UN planning documents in many countries significantly integrate human rights concepts and mainstream recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms. For example, in the **Central African Republic**, human rights were integrated into the UNDAF 2018-2021 and the post-conflict recovery strategy, which provides for the establishment and strengthening of the National Commission for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

In **Bangladesh**, the UNDAF 2017-2020 is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and focuses on overcoming structural inequalities, promoting the advancement of women and disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals and groups, strengthening governance and developing the capacities of rights-holders and duty-bearers. It also emphasizes the implementation of the country's human rights treaty

obligations. In **Haiti**, the UNCT and the Haitian Government signed the joint Action Plan for the period 2017-2021, which integrates human rights concepts and approaches and establishes indicators to measure the achievement of the SDGs. In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the Partnership for Sustainable Development: United Nations Strategy 2016-2020, makes specific reference to the implementation of the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms and promotes the participatory and rights-based implementation of the actions included in the Strategy. Since the Strategy entered into force, UN agencies have systematically used the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms in the design of their respective programmes. For example, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women developed a joint project aimed at ensuring that persons with disabilities can realize their right to live independently. The project follows up on specific recommendations issued by CEDAW, CESCR and the UPR.

Other countries where UNDAFs or joint UN development programmes significantly integrate human rights concepts and recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms include **Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Dominican Republic, the Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, State of Palestine<sup>2</sup>, Ukraine, Zambia and Zimbabwe**.

UN Human Rights continued to advocate for the inclusion of human rights concepts in climate laws and policies, including at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties decided to establish the first Gender Action Plan and the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Knowledge Platform, both of which contain significant human rights references.

<sup>2</sup> Reference to the State of Palestine should be understood in compliance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19.



UN Human Rights and UNDP facilitated the second Regional Consultations of National Human Rights Institutions of Central Asia in Kazakhstan. © OHCHR/Central Asia

## Widening the democratic space

*A total of 60 per cent of national expected accomplishments were fully or partially achieved over the last four years, with varying levels of progress achieved in those that are remaining.*

### Compliance of national laws, policies and institutions

#### Establishing national human rights institutions

National human rights institutions are established by States to promote and protect human rights. NHRIs that are in compliance with the Paris Principles are a cornerstone of national human rights protection systems and enable States to implement their international obligations at the national level.

In 2017, UN Human Rights supported the establishment and/or strengthening of NHRIs in 70 countries, in compliance with the Paris Principles, and assisted them in outlining their roles and responsibilities in pro-

moting and protecting human rights. As the Secretariat of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI), the Office provided support to the NHRI accreditation process and participated in the review process of 26 NHRIs by the GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation. In 2017, the status of several NHRIs was downgraded from 'A' to 'B' because they no longer met the standards of the Paris Principles. As of December, 121 NHRIs were accredited, including 78 with 'A' status.

Regarding the establishment of NHRIs, the Law on the Human Rights Commission of the **Central African Republic** was adopted, in April, and in September, its 12 commissioners were appointed by presidential decree. In December, a bill was adopted in the National Assembly to establish the National Human Rights Commission in **the Gambia**. The draft legislation on the Human Rights Commission of **Somalia** was passed by the Parliament and signed into law by the President in 2016. Following the enactment of the Law, establishment of the Commission commenced in 2017 with the selection process for its members. In December, the final list of recommended candidates was submitted for approval to the Executive Branch. A similar process took place in **Burkina Faso** where legislation to establish an NHRI was adopted in 2016, and a process to select the members of the Commission was launched in May and resulted in the nomination of nine members in December.

Technical assistance was provided to the Government of **Tunisia** for the development of a draft law establishing an NHRI in compliance with the Paris Principles. An initial draft was approved by the Council of Ministers, in 2014, and submitted to the Parliament for adoption. The draft was later withdrawn, however, as the Government decided to continue working on the draft to address some gaps and ensure inclusion of inputs from civil society. The revised draft was introduced to the Parliament in 2017 and is currently under consideration by the Parliamentary Committee on Rights, Freedoms and External Relations. Furthermore, the Governments of **Cook Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea** and **Tuvalu** committed to the establishment of NHRIs and are working on the required next steps.

NHRIs undertook steps to strengthen their capacities to work in greater compliance with the Paris Principles. The draft bill to reform the National Commission on Human Rights and Citizenship of **Cape Verde** is being reviewed by the Ministry of Justice. It is anticipated that the draft will be sent to the Parliament for adoption in 2018. A law on the reform of the National Human Rights Commission of **Chad** was adopted in December, reinforcing the compliance of the Commission with the Paris Principles. A proposal to convert the Office of the Public Defender in **Jamaica** into an NHRI, in full compliance with the Paris Principles, has been shared with the Cabinet and the Ministry of Justice.

In March, the **Liberia** Independent National Human Rights Commission was accredited with 'A' status. The Commission engaged different stakeholders on the implementation of UPR recommendations and was awarded appropriate funding to deploy 20 monitors to the field. Additionally, the Government of **Madagascar** adopted a decree, in December, which should lead to

the allocation of a budget for the proper functioning of the NHRI. In **Niger**, the National Human Rights Commission launched a website to give more visibility to its activities, enable victims of human rights violations to file their complaints online and encourage them to regularly engage with the international human rights mechanisms. As a result of its strengthened capacities, the National Human Rights Commission was credited with 'A' status, in March. Other NHRIs also maintained their 'A' status, including those in **Afghanistan, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nigeria** and **Panama**.

On the other hand, the Independent National Human Rights Commission of **Burundi** was downgraded to 'B' status as GANHRI found that it demonstrated inadequate independence and limited collaboration with civil society organizations. The NHRI in **Honduras** has attempted to regain its 'A' status on a number of occasions, the last of which was in 2016. The implementation of a number of recommendations issued by GANHRI, including amendments to its establishing law, remain pending.

### Protecting freedom of expression, freedom of association and media

The draft Law on Access to Information in **Cambodia**, developed in meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders, is in overall compliance with international standards. In **Kenya**, a draft National Policy on Public Participation has been finalized and is subject to validation. Once approved, the Policy will facilitate access to information, ensure that citizens have an opportunity to be heard when the Government seeks to adopt a law or policy and that groups in vulnerable situations can fully participate in political and public af-

## Independent National Human Rights Commission of Liberia gets recognition

In 2005, in line with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended the Liberian civil war, the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) was established to ensure the realization of human rights and enhance peace and national reconciliation through the implementation of the recommendations issued by the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In its earliest days, however, the INHRC was largely inactive and suffered a serious deficit of professionalism and credibility as it lacked both commitment and vision.

The Human Rights and Protection Section of the United Nations Mission in Liberia engaged with the Commission to help transform it into a more vibrant institution with a purpose, an action plan and the capacity to fulfil a much needed oversight role. The Section provided technical

support, ensured the Commission's compliance with international human rights principles, trained monitors in human rights advocacy and on the implementation of the National Human Rights Action Plan, advocated with national authorities to increase budgetary support and encouraged collaboration between the INHRC and civil society organizations in Liberia.

In 2017, the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions accredited the INHRC with 'A' status. As a result, the Commission now has the opportunity to operate with the same level of representation and participation as regional and international bodies and human rights mechanisms, which will benefit its efforts to promote and protect the rights of all persons in Liberia.



UN Human Rights staff members monitor demonstrations against corruption in Guatemala. © OHCHR/Guatemala

fairs. In **Mexico**, 26 states regulate the crime of insults against authorities in different ways, with a potentially negative impact on freedom of expression. In 2017, the Supreme Court established that the crime of insults against the authorities contravenes the Constitution. UN Human Rights therefore will advocate for the corresponding change in legislation in those states.

On a less positive note, in **Cambodia**, in an increasingly tense political environment ahead of the 2018 general elections, the Parliament enacted two sets of amendments to the Law on Political Parties that will allow for the suspension or dissolution of political parties on vague grounds and impose prohibitions on persons convicted on any ground from leading or being associated with political parties. There has been a further deterioration in the way that subnational authorities misapply the legislation on peaceful demonstrations. In October, the Ministry of Interior issued an administrative instruction, which directly contradicts the 2009 Law on Peaceful Demonstration and international standards and significantly restricts the capacity of civil society organizations and citizens to organize any kind of gathering. Under the instruction, subnational authorities are tasked with controlling NGO activities and are empowered to prevent or interrupt any activities that have been organized without formally notifying provincial and local authorities at least three days in advance. Similarly, in Egypt, a law for regulating the work of civil associations was

adopted in 2017, thereby imposing restrictions on the work of civil society organizations.

In **Honduras**, the Office and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed concerns over the adopted reforms of the Honduran Penal Code, which may negatively impact the exercise and enjoyment of freedom of expression in the country. The Office further advocated with the Government of **Jordan** against a proposed amendment to the Law on the right of freedom of expression and right to association, which would impose restrictive criteria related to the establishment of associations.

### Protecting human rights defenders

In May, in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, a number of advocacy and outreach activities were organized, contributing to the Senate's adoption of a bill on the protection of human rights defenders. The activities included two workshops that brought together senators, members of the National Commission for Human Rights and civil society actors to validate the draft law, as well as sustained advocacy with civil society organizations for its final adoption. Furthermore, in July, the President of **Burkina Faso** promulgated a law on the protection of human rights defenders, which was adopted in June by the National Assembly.

## Protection systems and accountability mechanisms

Some progress was made in the establishment and functioning of national protection mechanisms for civil society organizations and individuals working on human rights issues. In **Colombia**, the national army developed and strengthened the National Immediate Response System to Advance Stabilization to improve the quality of responses to threats and attacks against organizations that advocate for human rights. The Response System is triggered when complaints are made regarding alleged threats, displacement, extortion and attacks against human rights leaders, primarily in the departments of Chocó, Antioquia and Cauca. Furthermore, through the development of the national police's Protection Strategy for Vulnerable Populations, a new coordination mechanism was created whereby UN Human Rights informs the police about alleged threats and attacks against human rights defenders, which then triggers an immediate response by local police forces and judicial investigation groups.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, since the progressive establishment of individual protection networks, 19 networks have been trained on human rights monitoring and protection guidelines. This has strengthened the capacity of NGOs and members of the networks to handle individual cases. They are now able to more effectively assess reported threats against human rights defenders and provide basic protection advice.

In **Honduras**, the Office of the Attorney General began to develop a protocol for the investigation of crimes committed against human rights defenders. Also, in the Americas and together with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, UN Human Rights developed a joint mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders and journalists, which was launched in October and is included in the Inter-American Commission's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan.

Lastly, in **Papua New Guinea**, UN Human Rights partnered with UN agencies and national stakeholders to support the establishment of a referral pathway of services for survivors of sexual violence as part of the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence, which the National Executive Council approved in 2016. Consequently, victims of human rights violations were referred to legal assistance providers, such as the Office of the Public Solicitor, to seek protection and redress.

## Participation

Through a variety of activities, UN Human Rights contributed to the increased engagement of rights-holders in public life and to their enhanced capacities to claim their rights.

The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples facilitated the participation of 94 indigenous representatives in relevant meetings of the international human rights mechanisms. The beneficiaries of the Fund played a key role in launching the new mandate of the Expert Mechanism on the rights of indigenous peoples. The Office promoted space for civil society actors in international human rights fora, including by facilitating their engagement with the international human rights mechanisms and building their capacity and knowledge in relation to human rights issues. Practical guides and publications were developed and disseminated to over 9,000 civil society actors. Furthermore, three regional capacity-building workshops on civil society space and United Nations human rights recommendations were organized in Africa and in Asia and the Pacific, which brought together approximately 100 civil society actors from 43 countries.

In relation to results achieved in the field, the Electoral Code of **Cameroon** was revised to include a provision for the establishment of parity between women and men on the lists of political candidates. Consequently, political parties in Cameroon committed to developing a concrete plan of action to encourage the increased participation of women, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples in the legislative and presidential elections in 2018. A National Human Rights Defenders Network was established in **Guinea-Bissau** and a similar network in **Sierra Leone** brought together various civil society groups to collectively advocate for the adoption of a proposed law on the protection of human rights defenders. Moreover, in **Timor-Leste**, a network of human rights defenders that was created to protect the space for civil society actors, including organizations of persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTI community, assisted victims of alleged violations to seek redress and brought cases of alleged human rights violations to the attention of the Office of the Prosecutor and the international human rights mechanisms. In **Tajikistan**, the Government agreed to include civil society representatives in the governmental Working Group on Gender Legislation, the Protection of Women's Rights and the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

In **Paraguay**, UN Human Rights collaborated with the National Institute for Indigenous Issues, the Ministry of Women and a number of UN agencies to facilitate consultations with indigenous women to document their proposals on a variety of issues, such as participation, citizenship and non-discrimination, land and free and informed consent. The outcomes of the consultations were included in a publication that was launched in December and submitted to relevant authorities.

## Rebuilding conflict-torn communities in Colombia

In Colombia's violent heyday, even uttering the words "human rights" was unthinkable. Even having a cell phone could get you killed. For decades, community leaders were suspicious of authority and feared for their lives. That was the Colombia of conflict, of paramilitaries and Marxist guerrillas, shuttered schools and terrified teachers, child labour and forced recruitment.

Today, the path to peace is opening up. A treaty with the FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, has ended a major source of armed opposition and while others remain, people in the Serranía de San Lucas, a rural gold-mining corner of Antioquia Province, are becoming less fearful. "Now we have conciliators – we don't need to have armed people anymore," said Lina Viloria, leader of a community group that supports victims of sexual violence. "The paramilitaries or guerrillas would take our money or put us against one another. Now, we go everywhere, we are not afraid."

This unification is taking place in large part through the Network of Human Rights Trainers, established by UN Human Rights to teach more than 50 human rights defenders how to develop strategies, build new skills and feel more free and secure. Each member represents a group that fights for causes ranging from women's equality or ending child labour to environmental protection or land rights.

"We believe that by raising awareness in communities and helping them establish their own voice and do their own advocacy, that will help them add pressure over the longer term to demand change," said Kevin Turner, who coordinates the work of UN Human Rights in Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city. "We provide a platform for

these groups and the space for them to grow more confident. And our presence helps guarantee their safety."

The foothills of the Serranía San Lucas, where a river runs quietly and trees sway gently, saw some of the worst human rights abuses. "Conflict was generalized throughout this area, neighbour against neighbour," said Amada Mejía, a member of the network. "Many innocents died simply because they were caught between groups. Their bodies were dumped into the river by the thousands." She waved towards the flowing water.

The terror has given way to laughter and song and neighbours are becoming friends again as they face the challenges of rebuilding their communities. "As trust grew, we knew we had to tell our story to others. So we learned how to communicate with pictures and cameras," said Manuel Tovar of the Communications Collective for the Right to Land, one of the network's member groups. "At first we couldn't even take anyone's picture without getting into trouble."

Starting with a just motorcycle and a camera, Manuel and his friends scouted the countryside, filming problems and solutions and showing their films in villages – when they were allowed to. They took pictures of endangered species and mercury poisoning and illegal mining. They interviewed locals and held workshops about poverty and jobs. They spoke out against the forced recruitment of children into armed gangs. And people listened. Their work attracted attention and they were nominated for a national prize for defending human rights. By using radio, photography and video, they encouraged others to speak up about the problems their communities faced. They have added a human rights dimension to



Lina Viloria and Orlando Pabuena, members of the human rights defenders network in El Bagre. © OHCHR/J.D. Cortés

(cont.)



Manuel Tovar (left) and Amada Mejía (centre), members of the Communications Collective for the Right to Land in the Serranía de San Lucas. © OHCHR/J.D. Cortés

their work and are now interlocutors with municipal authorities, building bridges with local leaders and helping citizens take part in political life.

Not far from the riverbank, children and teenagers wave their hands in the air, singing and dancing to the sound of a guitar. Their youth group also belongs to the network and was set up to promote peace through arts and music – and to help put an end to violence and to the exploitation of children. Mirshan Mendoza, who initiated the youth group, speaks from experience. “It was just a decade ago, and the paramilitaries and guerrillas were having their worst fights,” he recalled. “They gathered us all into a park, even children. They made 14 of our leaders kneel, and shot them in the head. I still see it in my mind.” Incidents like these prompted him to act. “My brother wanted

to take up arms. I’m a singer, so I began singing,” he said. “First a dozen kids came. Then 30. And it snowballed.”

“I’m the son of a miner and during the holidays I went to the mine. We were eight or nine and it was so dangerous. Now we are making parents conscious of the danger and instead of sending their children to the mine, they send them to school.” From its modest beginnings, the youth group has grown to six volunteers and 600 children in 14 villages, with some children walking up to 40 minutes through the bush to attend the monthly gatherings. But behind the scenes, the technicalities of running a group in rural Colombia still get in the way – often, there’s not even enough money to buy drinks for the children who have walked so far to get here. But they’re working on it.



Mirshan Mendoza sings for a group of kids in La Capilla. © OHCHR/J.D. Cortés

*(cont.)*

Women, too, are escaping their prior fate – by building a new one. Lidia Julio has a gentle smile and a warmth that wants to draw you closer – except that if you do come any closer you’ll burn. Lidia is a baker and the president of La Capilla Bakers’ Association. She fans her breads on an old barrel of smoking wood, hoping her ragged piece of cardboard won’t catch fire.

“It is horrible to work like this, it is too hot and I have burned off my eyelashes,” she said. Lidia’s association has 12 bakers, all of them displaced women of indigenous or African descent who have suffered from armed conflict. They’re new at this and hope that someday, they will be running a proper bakery business. The women became motivated by watching their children learn about human rights in the youth network. They started to believe they, too, could exercise some rights. To help them, UN Human Rights arranged for government instructors to teach them to bake and to become entrepreneurs.

“My father taught me to *barequear*, to go to the mine, when I was little,” said Lidia. “We would put on rubber boots, trousers and a hat, take our batea pan, a stick and go open holes to mine the gold. Many of us stopped going to school. But it was dangerous. I taught my little brother to mine but one day he was bitten by a snake and he died. He was only eight.” Lidia apologizes for her tears but insists these stories must be told if they are ever to end.

“Mining is not the best road – we did it because we had no other option. We don’t want our children to live like we did.” For the time being, Lidia and her friends labour

over hand-made stoves in the crushing heat, but she knows things will improve. “One day we’ll have a large stove and some shade over our heads. And we’ll do it not by begging, but by working and offering a product that makes us feel happy.”

Here in Colombia’s gold-mining heartland, communities are coalescing after decades of mistrust. Men, women and children are becoming leaders, intent on finding strength in numbers and reclaiming their rights. Whether by filming documentaries or baking bread or teaching children songs about equality, they are building peace in Colombia, one person at a time.

Through its network of community groups, UN Human Rights provides a practical road map that helps people become familiar with the relative unknown – with government structures, participation in decisions, peace and their right to a dignified life. By helping them understand how human rights can support their work and by connecting them with powerful institutions, the Office is helping individuals and entire communities finally turn the page. Human rights defenders are essential to achieving positive changes in communities throughout Colombia. Reinforcing their participation in democratic processes, strengthening their voice with the private sector and advocating with the government to ensure their safety are top priorities. With so many communities gravely affected by decades of armed conflict, UN Human Rights is working in every region of Colombia to support human rights defenders as they help reconstruct the country’s social fabric and build peace.



Lidia Julio explains how bread is baked by women of La Capilla Bakers’ Association. © OHCHR/J.D. Cortés



A women's rights defender holds a sign during a visit to Akobo by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to South Sudan, November 2017. © UNMISS

## Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity

*A total of 78 per cent of national expected accomplishments were fully or partially achieved over the last four years, with varying levels of progress achieved in those that are remaining.*

### Compliance of national laws, policies and institutions

#### Gender-based violence and trafficking

Progress was achieved in the approval or enactment of legislation and policies to prevent and fight against gender-based violence. For example, in **Afghanistan**, a new Penal Code was passed under a presidential legislative decree and submitted to the Parliament for endorsement. The Code defines the crime of rape and criminalizes other offences, such as corrupt land

grabbing. Other legislative reforms with a bearing on the protection of women survivors of violence are ongoing, including the Anti-Harassment Law, which was approved by the Parliament and has been submitted for review to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Civil Society. In **Jamaica**, the national Strategic Action Plan for Ending Gender-Based Violence was launched, integrating a human rights perspective and relevant recommendations issued by the human rights treaty bodies and the UPR in relation to Jamaica. In **Kuwait**, further to the 2016 visit of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, a bill on combatting gender-based violence has been presented to the Parliament for the first time. Furthermore, a new bill on human trafficking and exploitation is currently being discussed by the Parliament in **Uruguay**. The draft legislation includes all of the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms and guiding principles on the protection of trafficked persons.

Training initiatives were undertaken to strengthen the capacities of national actors in tackling violence against women. UN Human Rights developed an online training course on the Latin American Model Protocol for the investigation of gender-related killings of women directed at relevant judicial officials. The

## Advocating for the rights of women in El Salvador

“Manuela” is a 33-year-old mother of two, who was convicted of murder and sentenced to 30 years in prison after suffering severe complications while giving birth to a stillborn baby, in El Salvador. When Manuela arrived at the hospital seeking emergency health care after the delivery, she was slipping in and out of consciousness. Instead of attending to her medical needs, the doctors reported her to the police on the suspicion that she had undergone an illegal abortion. She was shackled to her hospital bed and accused of murder. The facts of this case mirror those of at least 24 other cases in El Salvador of women who have been convicted of aggravated homicide after having a miscarriage or an abortion. El Salvador bans abortion in all circumstances, without exception.

Manuela’s case is significant, however, since it was heard by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which declared the case as admissible, representing the first time that an international human rights mechanism considered the case of a woman who has been criminalized while seeking medical care due to pregnancy complications. By virtue of its mandate to promote and protect all human rights and within the framework of the long-standing cooperation of UN Human Rights with the Inter-American system for the protection of human rights, the Office submitted an amicus brief in this case. Specifically,

the brief referenced international human rights law and focused on the impact of laws criminalizing abortion, total bans on abortion, the right to life, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, freedom from gender-based violence and freedom from discrimination of women and girls affected by such laws, as well as the right to a fair trial.

UN Human Rights has closely monitored all of the cases leading to the imprisonment of women unjustly accused of illegally terminating their pregnancy. During his first official visit to El Salvador, the High Commissioner met with women who were incarcerated in the Ilopango Women’s Detention Centre after being convicted of “aggravated homicide” in connection with obstetric emergencies. The High Commissioner asserted, “I have rarely been as moved as I was by their stories and the cruelty they have endured. It only seems to be women from poor and humble backgrounds who are jailed, a telling feature of the injustice suffered.” The High Commissioner also called upon El Salvador to launch a moratorium on the application of article 133 of the Penal Code and review all cases where women have been detained for abortion-related offences with the aim of ensuring compliance with due process and fair trial standards.



During his visit to El Salvador, the High Commissioner met with women human rights defenders advocating for an end to the absolute prohibition on abortion in the country, November 2017. © OHCHR/Central America

course has been disseminated in countries throughout Latin America where almost 300 judges, public prosecutors and police officers have been trained in 2017. In **Guatemala**, in cooperation with the School of Judicial Studies and the Supreme Court of Justice, the Office presented a toolkit for the incorporation of a human rights-based approach and a gender perspective into sentences of femicide and other forms of violence against women. The toolkit has been disseminated to all judges of the specialized and ordinary tribunals across the country and has been shared with other Latin American countries as a good practice.

At the global level, upon taking office, the Secretary-General set out to develop a new strategy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. The strategy was released in March and UN Human Rights contributed to the implementation of four priority areas, namely, putting the rights and dignity of victims first, ending impunity, engaging with civil society and external partners and improving strategic communications for education and transparency.

### Security sector

With regard to legislation on the use of force, in **Mexico**, legislation that was adopted by the state of Mexico was challenged before the Supreme Court due to its non-alignment with international standards. The Supreme Court issued a resolution which declared some parts of the legislation to be unconstitutional. In addition, the **Nigerian** army significantly enhanced its legal and institutional framework to ensure that it complies with international standards during counter-insurgency operations. Specifically, it adopted rules of engagement, a Code of Conduct for its operations and a human rights policy. It also established a human

rights desk, which addressed allegations of violations against army personnel and facilitated dialogue and engagement with civil society organizations. Moreover, in August, the Government announced a judicial commission to investigate military compliance with its Code of Conduct, rules of engagement and human rights obligations. In relation to the peace accords in **Colombia**, a decree was endorsed that formalized the Special Investigation Unit to dismantle paramilitary successor organizations.

In **Guatemala**, a proposal for amendments to the Law that regulates private security services, which would align it with international human rights standards, was presented to the Congress. In addition, State security institutions achieved progress in incorporating human rights into their policies. For instance, the police improved their internal procedures to limit the use of force against civilians, particularly in the context of judicial evictions. Furthermore, the unit within the Ministry of Interior that regulates private security services adopted internal manuals and protocols. Limited progress has been achieved, however, by national authorities in **Honduras** on the integration of a human rights-based approach into security policies. Recommendations from UN Human Rights regarding a number of legislative proposals were not fully considered.

### Protection systems and accountability mechanisms

Mechanisms were put in place by a number of States to provide enhanced human rights protection to their populations and bring those responsible for human rights violations to justice. The Government of the **Central African Republic** developed a comprehensive national protection strategy for witnesses and victims with a view to encouraging their collaboration in the search for truth

## Securing justice and reparations for victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In 2015, Hope (her real name) was 16 years old when she was raped by a 42-year-old neighbour at a farm outside of the town of Beni, in North Kivu province, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Unable to hide her trauma, she told her mother about the assault and was immediately taken to the nearest hospital. The hospital hosts a One Stop Centre for victims of sexual violence, which provides victims like Hope with holistic assistance (medical, psychological, legal and socioeconomic). After receiving the necessary medical care and psychosocial assistance, Hope's case was referred to the legal clinic that is located in the same hospital. She received additional support from the United Nations Joint Human

Rights Office (UNJHRO). Subsequently, the legal clinic raised her case with the special Congolese police unit in charge of cases relating to children and sexual violence. Following a thorough investigation, the perpetrator was arrested and convicted, in 2017, to seven years in prison. With the support of the One Stop Centre, Hope was reintegrated into her school and benefited from a grant to start a small income generating activity while also pursuing her studies. The efforts undertaken by UNJHRO to support duty-bearers and rights-holders, both in this case and in previous cases, has proven to be successful in securing justice and reparations for victims of sexual violence.



The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights meets with religious leaders from Mopti, in Mali, to discuss the security situation in the region, November 2017. © UN Photo/Harandane Dicko

and the fight against impunity before ordinary courts and transitional justice bodies. Among other provisions, the strategy includes a proposal for measures of protection aimed at ensuring the security and well-being of witnesses and victims. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the deployment of Joint Investigation Teams on 23 occasions, as well as the holding of 25 mobile court hearings, enabled a total of 903 witnesses and victims to claim their rights and file complaints. This resulted in the sentencing of 11 military officers and three police agents for sexual violence offences.

In **Nigeria**, a working group established in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to handle terrorism cases initiated the first major trial of Boko Haram detainees. In addition, the National Human Rights Commission organized public hearings on evictions and investigated allegations of serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by the military in the context of its deployment in Plateau State. Moreover, in **South Sudan** a special tribunal was established by the General Court Martial to carry out hearings in the trial of 12 army officers accused of committing crimes and human rights violations in Juba, in 2016.

In **Colombia**, UN Human Rights contributed to facilitation of dialogue to prevent violence and reduce ten-

sions in demonstrations. For instance, in October 2017, the Office helped reduce tensions between indigenous communities, mobilized in various regions of the country, and public security forces. This approach was also useful in ending a civil strike in Buenaventura. Other relevant examples include the dialogue process facilitated in La Lengüeta (Santa Marta) to promote respect for the territorial rights of the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the negotiations between peasants and the Government in Catatumbo (Norte de Santander), where agreements were reached on local development projects.

In **Mexico**, a law on disappeared persons entered into force, including a UN Human Rights recommendation to establish a mechanism to search for disappeared persons. The Government of **Afghanistan** endorsed the National Policy on Civilian Casualty Prevention and Mitigation and the Taliban established a Department for Prevention of Civilian Casualties and Complaints that is responsible for documenting civilian casualties and investigating complaints against Taliban members. In **Yemen**, the UN Human Rights monitoring, documentation and investigation mechanism conducted more than 100 visits to conflict-affected areas, prisons and detention facilities. Its findings were shared with the international community and national authorities for advocacy purposes.

At the international level, in his report to the General Assembly (A/72/316), the Secretary-General highlighted the critical role of human rights in preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism, with reference to observations and initiatives issued by UN Human Rights and the international human rights mechanisms. Indeed, UN Human Rights contributed to substantive discussions and the development of strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism, including for the Barcelona Plan of Action (January 2017), the Beirut Declaration on “Faith for Rights,” (March 2017) and the Rabat+5 Symposium (December 2017). Through work with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, a global human rights capacity-building project for law enforcement was implemented to support the integration of human rights into the counter-terrorism initiatives of security and law enforcement officials. Training sessions and engagement with senior government officials have taken place in **Iraq, Jordan, Mali, Nigeria** and **Tunisia** with plans to provide further training sessions in **Cameroon**.

## Engagement by the international community

Efforts were made to ensure that the international community was kept apprised of human rights issues of concern in conflict-affected areas. Specifically, a number of investigative bodies were established, including the Commission of Inquiry on **Burundi**, the Commission on Human Rights in **South Sudan** and a Fact-Finding Mission in relation to **Myanmar**. In addition, 11 monitoring missions were deployed, including one to Angola to monitor the human rights violations committed in the Kasai region of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**; three missions to Bangladesh to monitor the human rights violations of the Rohingya population in **Myanmar**; surge capacity deployed to **Kenya** in the context of the 2017 elections; one mission to **Qatar** to gather information on the impact of the Gulf crisis on the human rights situation; one to **Guatemala** to assist with human rights monitoring related to the crisis in the child



Experts of the Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar interview Rohingya children in a refugee camp in Bangladesh. © OHCHR

welfare system; one to Panama to remotely monitor the human rights situation in the context of massive protests in **Venezuela**; one to **Haiti** to assist with the establishment of the human rights section of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti; one to **Honduras** to assist with human rights monitoring following the crisis that unfolded after the elections; and one to **Togo** to monitor the human rights situation.

In the case of **Myanmar**, the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, various thematic mandate-holders, the High Commissioner and other UN partners, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, consistently alerted the international community to the seriousness of the situation in Rakhine State. This contributed to action being taken by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Security Council in an attempt to address the crisis. Through its resolution A/RES/72/248, the General Assembly called on authorities in Myanmar to end military operations that have led to the violations of the human rights of the Rohingya community and to grant unrestricted access to the international human rights mechanisms to independently monitor the human rights situation in the region. Furthermore, following a December 2017 special session on the human rights situation of the minority Rohingya Muslim population and other minorities in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, the Human Rights Council, through resolution A/HRC/RES/S-27/1, condemned the human rights violations committed in Rakhine State, called upon the Government to cooperate with the special procedures and

requested that the High Commissioner track progress made concerning the situation and provide updates to the Human Rights Council.

In relation to **Yemen**, the High Commissioner issued regular press releases to highlight the violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that were allegedly perpetrated by both sides to the conflict. These efforts contributed to the adoption by the Human Rights Council, in September, of a consensus resolution establishing a Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, who were appointed in December.

Through its support to the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Human Rights contributed to increased responsiveness and the integration of human rights concerns into the UN's response to conflict-related sexual violence in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. In **Guinea**, the Team of Experts assisted the Government to address accountability for the events of September 2009 in a stadium in Conakry, which resulted in serious human rights violations, including killings, sexual violence, torture and enforced disappearances. This support resulted in 16 indictments, including of former President Moussa Dadis Camara and high ranking military commanders and the hearing of over 450 witnesses and victims. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the Team of Experts provided technical assistance to the national army for the implementation of its action plan on combating sexual violence, which resulted in a reduced number of violations attributable to the military.

## UN Human Rights work on Syria

An important focus of the advocacy and reporting work undertaken by UN Human Rights during 2017 was the evolving human rights and humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. UN Human Rights ensured that evidence-based human rights information and analysis was integrated into the Secretary-General's monthly reports to the Security Council, and also released monthly Human Rights Digests to provide partners with early warning analysis tools aimed at highlighting human rights concerns in Syria. Furthermore, advocacy efforts were stepped up and included the formulation of a number of recommendations targeting parties to the conflict, Member States and UN partners involved in both the political and humanitarian response with a view to enhancing human rights protection in Syria.

Through the deployment of three human rights advisers to Beirut, Amman and Gaziantep, UN Human Rights continued to support the humanitarian leadership for the Syrian crisis, which resulted in increased advocacy around

violations of international law, and the integration of human rights into strategic and operational humanitarian decision-making fora and response plans.

UN Human Rights maintained regular contact with the Office of the Special Envoy as well as Member States in order to provide human rights analysis and early warning input into the political process. It was actively involved in developing the United Nations plan in support of the post-agreement transition phase in Syria, which was aimed at coordinating activities to reinforce transitional arrangements following the conclusion of a peace agreement. The planning process was endorsed by the UN Syria Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) in March 2017. The Office has also been involved in supporting the engagement of various actors with international human rights mechanisms and the work of the Human Rights Council, including civil society actors, and continued to cooperate with the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.



Human rights officer on a monitoring mission to Donetsk. © OHCHR/Ukraine

## Human rights integrated into UN policies and programmes

### Human Rights Due Diligence Policy

UN Human Rights worked to ensure that standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) were adopted in almost all peace missions and political missions and that HRDDP task forces were established to oversee the implementation of the Policy. For example, SOPs were approved or revised in peace operations in the **Central African Republic**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, **Libya**, **Mali**, **Somalia** and **South Sudan**. Moreover, General and Preliminary Risk Assessment Frameworks were developed by UN operations in **Guinea**, **Lebanon** and **Libya**. At headquarters level, the HRDDP was integrated into DPKO and DFS policies and guidance, including a number of United Nations Police guidelines.

### Humanitarian work

UN Human Rights deployed a number of field missions to support the UN response to humanitarian crises in, for example, **Bangladesh** (in relation to Myanmar) and the **Caribbean**. UN Human Rights further maintained three human rights officers to advise the humanitarian leadership working on the **Syria** crisis (based in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey), and deployed six human

rights monitors to north-east **Nigeria** to support the UN humanitarian response.

The Office maintained its leadership of the Protection Cluster in the **State of Palestine**<sup>3</sup> and led or co-led Protection Working Groups/Sectors in **Haiti**, **Mauritania**, **Papua New Guinea** and **Timor-Leste**. With these responsibilities, UN Human Rights played a key role in influencing the development of UN humanitarian plans and programmes. In the **State of Palestine**, for instance, the Office has been central to the development of Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Response Plans with a human rights focus and, as reflected in the 2018-2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan for the State of Palestine, protection concerns and enhanced respect for international humanitarian and human rights law are at the core of the UN's humanitarian engagement in the country. In addition, the Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Response Plans of **Mauritania**, **Nigeria** and **Ukraine**, fully integrate human rights principles.

At headquarters level, in line with its commitments at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, UN Human Rights developed two methodological tools on integrating human rights into humanitarian action, an assessment and analysis tool for UN Human Rights staff in emergencies and a new chapter in the manual on human rights monitoring addressing the specificities of monitoring in emergencies. It further strengthened

<sup>3</sup> Reference to the State of Palestine should be understood in compliance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19.

its support to field operations, including in humanitarian preparedness and response, by deploying two emergency response teams to the Regional Offices for Southern Africa and South-East Asia.

### Human Rights up Front Initiative

In the context of the Human Rights up Front (HRUF) Initiative, UN Human Rights managed to integrate HRUF requirements into UN action at the country and headquarters levels, including early warning analyses when engaging with other UN entities on human rights issues. The inter-agency report on establishing a common UN information management system on violations, led by the Office, served as a reference point to guide relevant UN colleagues on issues related to human rights and information management. Work was carried out to develop an analytical framework to integrate economic, social and cultural rights into early warning analysis, which was tested at the field level in **Fiji**. Also in the field, in **Colombia**, UN Human Rights ensured that the Special Political Mission implemented the obligatory online course on human rights for all of its incoming members and delivered orientation sessions on the human rights context in Colombia and the human rights responsibilities of UN personnel, including the HRUF Initiative. In **Somalia**, a HRUF stock-taking exercise was conducted to examine the drivers, root causes, multipliers and triggers of the conflict in Galmudug region. The outcome report highlighted that human rights violations were at the heart of the conflict and recommended robust early warning, prevention and response measures to these violations.

### Conflict prevention

In 2016 and 2017, the UN placed greater emphasis on conflict prevention. In 2016, UN Human Rights actively participated in the working group on conflict prevention and contributed to the creation of a UN compendium of prevention cases. In 2017, the Office actively participated in the development of activities linked to the June 13th Appeal, by the Government of Switzerland, to situate human rights at the heart of conflict prevention. Among other measures, the Appeal called for enhanced cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council in relation to decisions relevant to conflict prevention and to improve the Security Council's use of available information to inform its decisions, including briefings from UN Human Rights and reports of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

## The role of UN Human Rights

The contribution of UN Human Rights to the results outlined above was achieved through a wide variety of means, including through advocacy with government partners and civil society, the provision of technical cooperation and undertaking monitoring and reporting activities. More specifically, the Office provided technical and secretariat support to the international human rights mechanisms; engaged with and supported Member States in their efforts to comply with international human rights norms and standards; provided advisory services; and conducted research on thematic issues of concern. Moreover, it provided technical assistance to civil society actors, including groups in vulnerable situations, to enhance their capacities to claim and defend their rights and support their increased engagement in public life. Much of the work highlighted above was also achieved through trainings and workshops on various topics, including on human rights monitoring and documentation, reporting to the human rights treaty bodies and the UPR and human rights standards for judges, prosecutors and police.

UN Human Rights promoted human rights in intergovernmental and inter-agency deliberations and processes, such as the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as in meetings such as the World Economic Forum, in Davos, and the Annual Forum on Business and Human Rights.

In particular, the work of UN Human Rights consists of the following areas of expertise:

### Supporting standard-setting

UN Human Rights provides the various international human rights mechanisms with secretariat and technical assistance as they undertake their standard-setting functions. The Office contributes to the normative work of the Human Rights Council, its Advisory Committee and the special procedures. UN Human Rights also supports the progressive development of international law by carrying out legal research and providing secretariat assistance to the human rights treaty bodies for the preparation of general comments/general observations and jurisprudence related to individual complaints. In addition, through the Treaty Body Capacity-Building Programme, established by General

Assembly resolution 68/268, the Office builds the capacity of States to ratify treaties and implement their corresponding obligations.

### **Monitoring and reporting**

Through its human rights monitoring work, which is undertaken in accordance with international human rights standards, UN Human Rights collects, verifies and uses information to address human rights concerns. The Office also provides support to various human rights mechanisms which have monitoring and reporting as a part of their mandate. Human rights monitoring includes gathering information about incidents, observing events (elections, trials, demonstrations) and visiting sites, such as indigenous communities, places of detention and refugee camps. Human rights monitoring serves as an early warning tool to help national actors take steps to prevent or mitigate human rights violations. It provides government authorities and other stakeholders with relevant information to trigger corrective actions and immediate follow-up.

### **Technical cooperation and advisory services**

Through its technical cooperation activities, UN Human Rights aims to translate international human rights law and principles into practical methods, approaches, procedures and tools to be applied by international, regional and national actors in their human rights work. Technical assistance is provided to facilitate the implementation of and follow-up to recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms; ensure the preparation of reports to these mechanisms in accordance with relevant reporting guidelines; develop and implement human rights training programmes and materials; develop national human rights action plans; build and strengthen national protection mechanisms and structures to promote and protect human rights; review legislation and policies; and implement human rights indicators. Technical cooperation can take the form of advisory services, training courses, workshops and seminars, fellowships, grants, the provision of information and documentation and assessments of domestic human rights needs.

In implementing its technical cooperation work, UN Human Rights collaborates with relevant stakeholders at the national and regional levels, including civil society, national institutions and representatives of governments, parliaments and law enforcement agencies.

### **Advocacy and awareness-raising**

Through research, education, public information and advocacy activities, UN Human Rights contributes to the increased awareness and understanding by different stakeholders of specific human rights issues. The Office speaks out objectively in the face of human rights violations around the world and to highlight human rights challenges that require the attention of concerned stakeholders and a wider audience.

Advocacy and awareness-raising involves speaking out on behalf of victims; developing and implementing appropriate responses to violations; documenting and sharing good practices and preparing learning tools; reaching out to multiple stakeholders; implementing awareness-raising campaigns on thematic issues or on the occasion of special dates and anniversaries; and promoting the integration of a human rights perspective into the work of the United Nations as a whole. UN Human Rights fulfils its advocacy and awareness-raising role by maintaining a continuous dialogue with Member States, civil society and other stakeholders and by supporting the High Commissioner's regular engagement through public statements, speeches, opinion articles, country visits, high-level meetings and other key outreach activities. In addition to the traditional media, the Office uses social media platforms to extend its global outreach and broaden awareness of human rights issues.

### **Building partnerships**

UN Human Rights collaborates with numerous stakeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels, both within and outside the United Nations system, to implement its mandate. Partners include Member States, NHRIs, civil society organizations, the private sector, foundations, regional and international organizations, UN Secretariat departments, UN peace missions and agencies, funds and programmes. In addition, the Office cooperates with the international human rights machinery to address global human rights issues. Working with these partners, UN Human Rights seeks to maximize the impact of its work while making efficient use of its available resources.