

# About UN Human Rights

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) is the leading UN entity on human rights. The General Assembly entrusted both the High Commissioner and his Office with a unique mandate to promote and protect all human rights for all people. The United Nations human rights programme aims to ensure that the protection and enjoyment of human rights is a reality in the lives of all people. UN Human Rights also plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of the three interconnected pillars of the United Nations – peace and security, human rights and development.

UN Human Rights provides assistance in the form of technical expertise and capacity-development in order to support the implementation of international human rights standards on the ground. It assists governments, which bear the primary responsibility for the protection of human rights, to fulfil their obligations and supports individuals to claim their rights. Moreover, it speaks out objectively on human rights violations.

UN Human Rights is part of the United Nations Secretariat and has its headquarters in Geneva, as well as an office in New York. Its staff is based in 59 field presences, in regional and country/stand-alone offices, United Nations peace or special political missions and in United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs).

## Method

The work of UN Human Rights encompasses three broad areas, namely, human rights standard-setting, monitoring and supporting the implementation of human rights obligations by States. Substantive and technical support is provided to the various UN human rights bodies as they undertake their standard-setting and monitoring duties. Knowledge and awareness of all human rights, whether civil, cultural, economic, political or social rights, are deepened and the capacity of rights-holders and duty-bearers are strengthened through applied thematic research and analyses, methodologies, development and training. International human rights experts are also deployed to field offices and other missions, including in circumstances of crisis, to assist countries that are working to fulfil their human rights obligations.

### Mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

General Assembly resolution 48/141 charges the High Commissioner for Human Rights with “principal responsibility” for human rights in the United Nations with the mandate to:

- Promote and protect all human rights for all;
- Recommend that bodies of the United Nations system improve the promotion and protection of all human rights;
- Promote and protect the right to development;
- Provide technical assistance for human rights activities;
- Coordinate United Nations human rights education and public information programmes;
- Work actively to remove obstacles to the realization of human rights;
- Work actively to prevent the continuation of human rights violations;
- Engage in dialogue with governments in order to secure respect for all human rights;
- Enhance international cooperation;
- Coordinate human rights promotion and protection activities throughout the United Nations system; and
- Rationalize, adapt, strengthen and streamline the UN human rights machinery.

The work of UN Human Rights is based on the Office’s Management Plan (OMP), which guides implementation of the Human Rights Programme of the Secretary-General’s Strategic Framework. By aligning the whole Office to a common set of results connected with the various components of its mandate, the OMP enhanced the Office’s effectiveness in implementing the Strategic Framework, increasing synergies across functions and ensuring the best possible use of available resources.

This is the last annual report relating to the OMP covering the period from 2014-2017. The achievements that were attained under the six thematic priorities in 2017 are summarized in the printed version of the report and are listed under the corresponding field presence or division chapters that can be found on the annexed USB key. The OMP 2014-2017 also identified eight global management outputs (GMOs) to improve



The façade of Palais Wilson, UN Human Rights headquarters in Geneva, illuminated on Human Rights Day, December 2017. © OHCHR

efficiency within the Office. The achievements under these GMOs are elaborated in the Management chapter on page 66.

### Supporting the human rights bodies and mechanisms

The Human Rights Council (HRC), which is composed of 47 Member States of the United Nations that are elected by the General Assembly for fixed terms, receives secretariat and technical support from the Office in its work, including in the context of its regular and special sessions, organizational meetings and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies. UN Human Rights also organizes and supports stakeholder meetings, special events, discussions and expert panels.

In addition, UN Human Rights supports the Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. By November 2016, all 193 Member States had been reviewed by the UPR for the second time and in May 2017, the third cycle began. During 2017, States had their human rights records reviewed by the Working Group, which benefited from the background documentation prepared by UN Human Rights to facilitate the review. In this context, the Office develops UPR training modules and briefs States and other stakeholders on the UPR mechanism. It provides States with technical assistance to strengthen their national processes so that they are better able to engage with the UPR and other international human rights mechanisms and then follow-up on the implementation of their recommendations.

Furthermore, UN Human Rights provides secretariat and technical assistance to independent human rights

experts, known as special procedures mandate-holders, who are appointed by the Council and mandated to report and advise on human rights issues and situations from a thematic or country-specific perspective. As of the end of 2017, there were 56 special procedures; 44 of which are dedicated to thematic issues and 12 of which are dedicated to country situations. The Office provides thematic, fact-finding, policy, legal and methodological expertise, research, analysis and documentation and assists with logistical and administrative matters. With the support of UN Human Rights, the special procedures undertake country visits; initiate action in relation to individual cases and concerns of a broader, structural nature, including by sending communications to States and other stakeholders; conduct thematic studies and convene expert consultations; contribute to the development of international human rights standards; engage in advocacy; raise public awareness; and provide advice for technical cooperation. Special procedures report annually to the Human Rights Council. The majority of the mandates also report to the General Assembly.

Finally, UN Human Rights provides support to the 10 human rights treaty bodies. The treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that consider the progress that has been made and the challenges that are being faced by countries in implementing the obligations of the international human rights treaties they have ratified. All but two of these committees may, under certain circumstances, receive and consider individual complaints or communications from individuals regarding violations of treaty provisions. The results of the deliberations of the treaty bodies contribute to a rich and dynamic body of jurisprudence on international human rights law.

## Developing human rights policy and guidance, offering advice and strengthening capacity

UN Human Rights maps emerging trends in human rights and identifies lessons learned from human rights work that is carried out at headquarters and in the field. Based on these trends, the Office produces policy, guidance and capacity-strengthening tools, such as methodologies and training materials, which translate international human rights law into practical approaches and procedures that can be used by the UN and other actors at the national level. Providing advice, training, support and outreach to multiple stakeholders, including Member States, individuals, civil society and national and regional human rights institutions, are integral parts of the Office's approach to implementing the mandate of the High Commissioner.

## Mainstreaming of human rights

Under its mainstreaming mandate, UN Human Rights works to ensure that a human rights-based approach is integrated into the UN system's programmes on development, humanitarian assistance, peace and security, governance and the rule of law. At a practical level, UN Human Rights advances human rights mainstreaming through its active participation in UN inter-agency bodies and activities and the High Commissioner's participation in the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. UN Human Rights advocates for policy coherence in accordance with an approach that is based on respect for all human rights yet pays particular attention to victims of human rights violations and those who are most at risk of becoming victims. It also seeks to systematically inform UNCTs about the recommendations emanating from the international human rights mechanisms and to help them mainstream follow-up activities into their programmes.

## Working in countries

As of the end of 2017, UN Human Rights was operating or supporting 59 field presences. The in-country presence of the Office is essential to identifying, highlighting and developing responses to human rights challenges in close collaboration with governments and the broader United Nations system. Responses may involve training police, soldiers and judges, helping to draft national legislation that is in line with international human rights standards and working with States on the fulfilment of their obligations to implement the recommendations issued by the international human rights mechanisms, including the UPR. In many countries and regions, UN

Human Rights cooperates with human rights groups, academic and research institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs), including charities, advocacy groups and other NGOs, in order to strengthen their capacities and effectiveness. Staff are also deployed to rapidly developing humanitarian and other crises and to support the mandated commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions that are established in response to serious human rights abuses.

## Structure

In addition to its headquarters in Geneva, UN Human Rights has an office at UN Headquarters in New York and, as of 31 December, 12 regional offices or centres and 14 country or stand-alone offices (see map on pages 62-63). Furthermore, UN Human Rights supports the human rights components of UN peace missions or political offices and deploys human rights advisers to work with the UNCTs.

The Geneva-based headquarters has four substantive divisions: the Research and Right to Development Division, which develops policy and provides guidance, tools, advice and capacity-strengthening support on thematic human rights issues, including for human rights mainstreaming purposes; the Human Rights Treaties Division, which supports the human rights treaty bodies; the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division, which is responsible for overseeing and implementing the Office's work in the field; and the Human Rights Council Mechanisms Division, which provides substantive and technical support to the HRC, the Council's UPR mechanism and the Council's special procedures. Core management, planning, coordination and outreach functions are handled by dedicated services and sections, which report directly to the Deputy High Commissioner. For the current organizational chart, please refer to page 163.

## Staff

As of 31 December, the Office was employing 1,302 staff members. Of those staff members, 558 (43 per cent) were based in the field, 691 (53 per cent) were based in Geneva and 53 (4 per cent) were based in New York. UN Human Rights also collaborated with close to 700 human rights officers who served in 13 UN peace missions or political offices.

## How UN Human Rights is funded

UN Human Rights is partially funded from the United Nations regular budget, which provided 44 per cent of the resources expended to implement the Office's programme of work in 2017, and partially through voluntary contributions from donors, the majority of which are Member States. The cash amount of the regular budget funding that is allocated to UN Human Rights has gradually increased since 2005, when leaders attending the World Summit committed to a doubling of the resources available for the Office over a period of five years. At the beginning of the biennium, the approved regular budget appropriation for UN Human Rights was US\$190.5 million for 2016-2017. The allocations for 2016 and 2017 increased during each year to allow for implementation of urgent mandates of the Human Rights Council, for a total of US\$215.5 million. This can be compared with allocations of US\$206.9 million in 2014-2015, US\$177.3 million in 2012-2013, US\$151.6 million in 2010-2011, US\$120.6 million in 2008-2009, US\$83.4 million in 2006-2007 and US\$67.6 million in 2004-2005. For more information, please refer to pages 92-112.

The level of voluntary funding allocated to UN Human Rights has increased substantially over the last decade, almost tripling from US\$41.2 million in 2002 to nearly US\$120 million in 2008. In 2009, contributions dropped slightly to US\$118.1 million and then sharply decreased in 2010 to US\$109.4 million before making a slight recovery in 2011 and 2012 when US\$111.1 million was received in each of those years. The level of voluntary funding for UN Human Rights amounted to US\$121.2 million in 2013, increased to US\$123.7 million in 2014 and then again to US\$125.8 million in 2015 before reaching US\$129.6 million in 2016. In 2017, a total of US\$142.8 million was raised in voluntary contributions, representing the highest amount ever received by the Office.

The amount of unearmarked voluntary contributions grew steadily from 2002 until 2009, when it reached a maximum of 56 per cent of total contributions received. While unearmarked contributions dropped slightly to 54 per cent in 2010 and again to 51 per cent in 2011, they increased to 53 per cent in 2012 and 54 per cent in 2013. In 2014, however, the trend was reversed and the proportion of unearmarked funding decreased to 47 per cent and then to just 37 per cent in 2015 and 38 per cent in 2016, before increasing again to 43 per cent in 2017. Please refer to pages 77-91 for more information on funding, trends and challenges and pages 123-143 for the profiles of all donors in 2017.

## How UN Human Rights spends its budget

Total expenditures in 2017, including both regular budget and voluntary contributions, reached US\$246.7 million (compared to US\$223.3 million in 2016, US\$225.9 million in 2015 and US\$239.1 million in 2014). In 2017, nearly 48 per cent of total expenditures were devoted to fieldwork activities, particularly capacity-strengthening projects and human rights monitoring, which were predominantly financed through voluntary contributions. Approximately 11 per cent of total expenditures were spent on thematic research, human rights mainstreaming, the development of policy and the provision of guidance and tools, 10 per cent on supporting the human rights treaty bodies, including policymaking organs, and 12 per cent on support for the Human Rights Council and its special procedures. The remainder was devoted to programme support (6 per cent), executive direction and management, resource mobilization and outreach activities (9 per cent) and the trust funds and miscellaneous activities (4 per cent). Further information on the financial accounts for the year-end to 31 December and the breakdown of expenditures and the allocation of voluntary contributions can be found on pages 92-112.

## History of the UN human rights programme

The UN human rights programme has grown considerably since its modest beginnings almost 70 years ago. Organizationally, the programme started out in the 1940s with a small Division in the UN Secretariat in New York. The Division later moved to Geneva and was upgraded to the Centre for Human Rights in the 1980s. At the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, Member States decided to establish a more robust human rights institution and later that year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/141 to create the post of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

This resolution led to the transformation of the Centre for Human Rights into the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights). The new Office was vested with a wide-ranging mandate and primary responsibility for promoting, coordinating, strengthening and streamlining human rights work and related activities throughout the United Nations system. Twelve years later, at the 2005 UN World Summit, Heads of State from around the world committed themselves to an expansion of the UN human rights programme that recognized the central role and importance of ensuring the application of a human rights-based approach in all aspects of the UN's work. At the same time, the three pillars of the UN system were recognized as interconnected, namely, peace and security, development and human rights. The growth in the UN's human rights activities reflects the increasing strength of the international human rights movement since the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on 10 December 1948. Drafted as "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations," the



Declaration sets out basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all human beings are entitled to enjoy. Over time, this unprecedented affirmation of human rights became widely accepted as the standard to which all governments should adhere. The Declaration, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol, form the "International Bill of Human Rights." International Human Rights Day is now observed around the world, on 10 December.

As international human rights law developed, a number of UN human rights bodies were established to respond to evolving human rights challenges. These bodies, which rely on UN Human Rights for substantive and logistical support, are either Charter-based (political bodies with mandates originating in the United Nations Charter that are composed of representatives of Member States) or treaty-based (committees established by international human rights treaties that are composed of independent experts and mandated to monitor the compliance of States Parties with their treaty obligations). The Commission on Human Rights, which was established in 1946 and reported to the Economic and Social Council, was the key United Nations intergovernmental body responsible for human rights until it was replaced by the Human Rights Council, in 2006. In addition to assuming the mandates and responsibilities previously entrusted to the Commission, the Council reports and makes recommendations to the General Assembly on ways to develop international human rights law. Two years after its first session, the Council operationalized the Universal Periodic Review.

# UN Human Rights around the world



-  Headquarters
-  Regional offices/centres
-  Country/stand-alone offices/Missions

-  Human rights components of peace/political missions
-  Human rights advisers/officers in United Nations Country Teams

\* Deployed through the UNDG Strategy for the Deployment of Human Rights Advisers.

\*\* Closed in 2017.



<sup>1</sup> Reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo

– Reference to Palestine should be understood in compliance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

As at 31 December 2017