Poverty and economic, social and cultural rights

_Pursuing economic, social and cultural rights and combating inequalities and poverty, including in the context of the economic, food and climate crises_

**Background**

The year 2012 presented many challenges and opportunities with respect to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Arab uprising, global financial crisis and rising inequalities within and between countries fuelled a powerful global social movement for human rights. The fallout from the financial crisis continues to be acute in many countries in both the South and North, the poorest of which are often the hardest hit. Austerity measures had serious implications for the enjoyment of economic and social rights through the rolling back of social safety nets. Human rights demands are universal, urgent and insistent and are featuring strongly in international debates on the form and content of the post-2015 global development agenda.

The fallacy that development outcomes can be achieved and sustained without due consideration for human rights has been clearly exposed. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties are founded on fundamental values and principles of human dignity and freedom and require States to uphold universal standards at all times, including the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR). The 2000 Millennium
Declaration placed human rights commitments and development goals at the centre of the international agenda. This unified vision of human rights and development was reinforced at the 2005 World Summit, the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20 Summit).

With the 2015 end-date of the MDGs fast approaching, the Secretary-General launched an extensive global consultative process to prepare the post-2015 development agenda. A High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 agenda was appointed by the Secretary-General in June 2012 and an Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, composed of Member States, was established following the Rio +20 Summit. In order to support these two bodies and provide substantive inputs to their work, the Secretary-General established a UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and tasked the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to carry out a wide range of thematic and country-level consultations on key issues, lessons learned and recommendations that should inform the deliberations of Member States.

**OHCHR’s role**

Undertaking legal analysis and applied research, developing practical and methodological tools and learning packages, as well as providing substantive guidance and technical advice lie at the core of OHCHR’s work and mandate. OHCHR supports Member States, human rights and development practitioners at the international and national levels as well as UN partners, including through capacity-strengthening activities and by sharing knowledge and expertise on ESCR and a human rights-based approach to development.

OHCHR endeavours to integrate all human rights, including the right to development, and their gender dimensions, in international cooperation and national development policies and economic and social programmes. OHCHR leads UN system-wide efforts to mainstream human rights in the UN’s development policies and programmes. OHCHR also strives to ensure that the post-2015 development vision will be a global, comprehensive and balanced framework that universally applies to all and is aligned with and grounded in all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, as well as the principles of equality, accountability and participation.

As part of its effort to promote the full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, the Office continues to provide dedicated support to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), tasked to review the national-level implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and its Optional Protocol, as well as to other treaty monitoring bodies and special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

The following key results were achieved by the Office in 2012.

**National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)**

OHCHR continued to provide technical assistance to governments, civil society and other national stakeholders, at their request, in order to make the necessary changes to national legislation and policies to realize ESCR and integrate human rights standards and principles in national development policies, plans and budget processes. OHCHR’s substantive research, technical advice and practical learning tools have helped raise awareness and build the capacities of national actors to align national policies and programmes with human rights standards.

*Increased integration of human rights standards and principles in national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, public budgets and laws and policies governing development cooperation, trade, finance, investment and business activities*

In Ecuador, as a result of OHCHR’s technical support, 120 public planning officials increased their knowledge and skills to integrate a human rights perspective in the formulation of public policies. A set of national *Guidelines to formulate sector-specific public policies* was revised and will serve as the main tool for the National Secretariat for Development and Planning (SENPLADES) to integrate human rights in development planning. The tool will strengthen the capacity of SENPLADES officials to provide technical assistance to line ministries on sectoral public policies. In addition, effective support was provided to SENPLADES in the application of OHCHR’s human rights indicators framework when developing structural indicators for all human rights, in line with key Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations.
Important strides were undertaken to integrate human rights within national poverty reduction strategies. In Niger, OHCHR collaborated with the Ministry of Justice and the UN Country Team (UNCT) to include human rights and gender perspectives in the National Economic and Social Development Programme for 2013-2015. In Haiti, an advocacy tool was developed with specific recommendations on how to integrate the protection of human rights in return and relocation programmes for internally displaced persons, including with respect to vulnerability criteria for the selection of camps for return and relocation. To this end, OHCHR provided substantive capacity-building support to and partnered with the Government and members of the Protection Cluster.

In relation to human rights indicators, many Member States and human rights defenders, including in Bolivia, Mexico, Paraguay, the Philippines and Togo, increasingly applied OHCHR’s conceptual and methodological framework in the development of indicators. In Paraguay, for instance, a total of 71 indicators on the right to health, disaggregated by age, sex, ethnic group, location, disability and people living with HIV, were developed under the leadership of the Executive Human Rights Network, the Ministry of Health and the Department of Statistics, Census and Surveys, with the guidance of OHCHR and other UN agencies. Indicators developed in these countries will further contribute to the development of rights-based policies, help assess the compliance of national policies with international human rights treaties and provide empirical information to human rights advocates. OHCHR’s new flagship publication entitled *Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation* significantly contributed to this progress.

OHCHR extensively reached out to and engaged with governments, businesses and private sector actors, civil society and UNCTs on implementing the *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*. In Papua New Guinea, a multi-stakeholder Human Rights Forum, chaired by the Department of Justice, established a technical working group on business and human rights to explore ways of implementing the Guiding Principles. OHCHR also engaged with relevant regional institutions, including the European Union, OECD, the Council of Europe and the Pan-African Conference, on the implementation of the Guiding Principles. OHCHR briefed the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Human Rights on the Guiding Principles and their possible application within the context of the Council of Europe. This briefing informed a subsequent study undertaken by the Council of Europe on *Corporate Social Responsibility in the Field of Human Rights* (CDDH(2012)017). In January 2013, the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers took note of the study and committed to elaborating a declaration supporting the Guiding Principles as well as a soft-law instrument on implementation of the Guiding Principles.

**Increased compliance of national laws, policies and programmes with international norms and standards on economic, social and cultural rights**

As a result of a regional seminar organized by OHCHR in Bujumbura in April 2012, a total of 35 representatives from national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in the Central African region increased their knowledge and capacities on a wide range of topics related to ESCR. This important initiative enabled NHRIs to influence laws and policies in their respective countries and undertake effective monitoring of ESCR in their work as they do for civil and political rights. Similarly, in June 2012, further to an OHCHR workshop, the knowledge and capacity of NHRIs from Djibouti, Ethiopia and Tanzania to monitor ESCR was strengthened.

In the Central Asia region, OHCHR’s work on the right to housing yielded tangible results. In Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare developed an action plan to implement the concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) while the Agency of Construction and Utilities developed a plan to implement the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing. In Kyrgyzstan, as a result of public hearings organized by OHCHR in the Parliament, which included government bodies, experts, civil society and international organizations, the draft Housing Code integrated many aspects of the right to adequate housing.
With respect to the right to enjoy just and favourable conditions of work in Guatemala, OHCHR carried out an assessment of the major obstacles and challenges faced by the Labour Inspectorate at the local level to protect the rights of agricultural workers. The assessment was shared with senior government officials. As a result, the Ministry of Labour strengthened the capacity of the General Labour Inspectorate by hiring 100 inspectors. Furthermore, to contribute to the increased number and quality of rural inspections carried out by the inspectors, OHCHR and the General Labour Inspectorate developed a protocol to monitor the labour rights of land workers which is expected to be adopted in 2013.

**Increased protection by national judicial, quasi-judicial and administrative mechanisms of redress against violations of economic, social and cultural rights**

OHCHR promoted discussions on the availability and effectiveness of domestic legal remedies in cases of ESCR violations with a view to encouraging the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR. To this end, events were organized in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Spain and Uruguay with the participation of civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, lawyers, judges and academic institutions.

In October 2012, the Parliament of the Island of Jersey adopted the Debt Relief Law (Developing Countries), which bans “vulture funds” from using its courts to sue the world’s poorest countries for historic debts. This was a result of the submission made by the Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights to lawmakers, which called on the Island of Jersey to follow the example of the United Kingdom.

**Responsiveness of the international community (EA 10)**

*Increased integration of key human rights issues in global, regional and national responses to development, economic, food and climate crises and other challenges, including in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda*

In the lead-up to the June 2012 Rio+20 Conference, OHCHR encouraged all UN Member States to support the full integration of human rights into the Rio process. As a result of this effort and the active participation of OHCHR in the conference, the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, had a strong focus on reducing inequalities, fostering inclusion and achieving justice in accordance with international human rights standards. The outcome document also emphasized the need to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination.

To ensure that human rights are further reflected in the post-2015 debates within and outside the UN system, OHCHR produced a Think Piece on Human Rights and Post-2015 Agenda entitled *Towards Freedom from Fear and Want*. This substantively contributed to the work of the Secretary-General’s UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Agenda which recommended in its June 2012 report *Realizing the Future We Want for All* the identification of human rights as one of three fundamental principles for the post-2015 agenda (along with equality and sustainability).

OHCHR also continued to actively support the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)-led global thematic and national consultations on the post-2015 agenda. Since mid-2012, OHCHR and UNDP have co-led the UNDG global thematic consultations on governance and accountability and are scheduled to report in March 2013. In addition to global online consultations on governance and accountability, OHCHR supported a number of regional events organized by UN agencies in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and South-East Asia to ensure the prominence of a human rights perspective. By way of example, the Declarations adopted during the Manila and Dhaka regional meetings on the post-2015 development agenda, organized by the UN Millennium Campaign, strongly...
reaffirmed human rights standards and principles. These Declarations attracted broad support from participating Member States, civil society and other human rights actors at regional and national levels. OHCHR further served as an active member on the Advisory Group for the UNDG global thematic consultations on inequalities and extensively contributed to the thematic consultations on health, food and water.

In support of its political mobilization and UN Inter-agency advocacy strategies, OHCHR partnered with the Centre on Economic and Social Rights to complete a two-year programme of research and expert consultations on accountability mechanisms for the post-2015 framework which culminated in a joint flagship publication entitled *Who Will Be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. To complement this effort, OHCHR and UNDP organized an expert consultation in November 2012 on criteria and measurement proposals for governance and human rights in the post-2015 agenda. This expert consultation attracted a leading group of human rights, development and measurement specialists, including representatives of national statistical offices.

The meeting generated a range of concrete proposals on how to integrate human rights evaluation and monitoring criteria into a post-2015 global monitoring framework. OHCHR's indicators framework was accepted as an important source of guidance on indicator selection. It also informed the work of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme’s Working Group on Equality and Non-Discrimination in relation to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in the identification of possible water and sanitation targets and indicators for a post-2015 agenda.

The year 2012 saw the completion of two years of intensive and collaborative work on a book entitled *Realizing the Right to Development: Essays in Commemoration of 25 years of the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development*. This book brings together in-depth, analytical studies undertaken by more than 30 international experts which address the context, meaning and application of this right. The book also reaffirms the relevance, added value and transformative potential of the right to development to shape both human rights and development policy and practice and makes the case for its widespread use in the quest
POVERTY AND ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

for sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda.

In 2012, the Social Forum of the Human Rights Council brought together over 30 experts and activists from around the world to discuss the theme of People-Centred Development and Globalization. The meeting concluded with several action-oriented recommendations, including with regard to democratic governance, participation and social movements, financing for development, the global partnership for development and sustainable development. Participants called for a development paradigm based on the principles of human rights, including the right to development, equality, sustainability and solidarity and made specific recommendations in the context of globalization and improved governance, including at the global level.

In May 2012, the Committee on World Food Security, the main international and intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition, adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. The Guidelines are the first international guidance on the governance of land tenure adopted through intergovernmental negotiations, with the participation of civil society and the private sector. OHCHR provided technical support throughout the intergovernmental negotiations to ensure the Guidelines were consistent with international human rights law.

The UN Special Rapporteurs on the right to food and on extreme poverty made a joint proposal to establish a Global Fund for Social Protection that attracted considerable interest from a range of partners, including the International Labour Organization. The proposal was presented to the 39th session of the Committee on World Food Security in October 2012, prompting the Committee to endorse specific recommendations on “the role of international cooperation in reinforcing national actions to implement sustainable social protection programmes and systems.” The Committee also declared that “social protection programmes for food security and nutrition should be guided by human rights norms and standards.”

The Special Rapporteur on the right to food organized, jointly with OHCHR and the Food

Human rights in the Rio+20 outcome document

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<th>The United Nations Member States gathered at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, for the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. While the outcome document was not as ambitious as many had hoped, one of the remarkable achievements of this conference was the catalogue of human rights reaffirmations and commitments included in the outcome document, which were based on international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. OHCHR’s advocacy helped to secure this result. The provisions encompassed in the outcome document included:</th>
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<td>- The need for reducing inequalities and ensuring inclusion and justice;</td>
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<td>- The need to respect, protect and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without discrimination of any kind;</td>
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<td>- Provisions on the right to development, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to food, the right to water and sanitation, the right to health and the right to education;</td>
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<td>- The recognition of “all human rights in the context of sexual and reproductive health,” and the right to have control over and decide freely on matters related to sexuality;</td>
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<td>- Requirements related to labour rights, fundamental rights at work, the right to self-determination, the rights of people living under foreign occupation, gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women (while highlighting provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women);</td>
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<td>- Special provisions for women, indigenous peoples (referring to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), minorities, the human rights of all migrants (regardless of their migration status), older persons, persons with disabilities and workers;</td>
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<td>- A call for the rule of law, democracy, good governance, accountability, empowerment, international cooperation, regulation of business and industry, including through “responsible business practices” (referring to the UN Global Compact which contains human rights requirements) and support to the implementation of the UN Guidelines on land tenure; and</td>
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<td>- A demand for a participatory process to develop new Sustainable Development Goals that respect all Rio Principles and are consistent with international law, including, implicitly, human rights law.</td>
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and Agriculture Organization, a second regional consultation in Nairobi on 4-5 April 2012 for countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (the first was held in 2011 in Latin America) to identify steps to strengthen laws, policies and strategies for the realization of the right to food. In addition to government and civil society experts, the consultation gathered together parliamentarians and experts from NHRIs and led to the establishment of a regional network of parliamentarians to follow up on right to food issues.

Human rights mainstreaming within the United Nations (EA 11)

*Increased integration of all human rights standards and principles into UN system development policies and programmes*

The mainstreaming of human rights principles and standards in UN policies, guidelines and operational tools on development programming is one of the core mandates of OHCHR, including the development of practical learning and methodological tools, strengthening UN capacities to effectively support national-level efforts to protect and promote human rights.

The UN General Assembly resolution (A/RES/67/226) on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN operational activities for development acknowledged close linkages between peace and security, development and human rights. As a result of OHCHR’s substantive contributions, the resolution included stronger references to a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to development and the right to development and contained two new provisions which explicitly support the UN’s efforts to strengthen links between its normative (including human rights) and operational work.

At the UN Inter-agency level, OHCHR continued to chair and lead the work of the UNDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism (UNDG-HRM). The UNDG-HRM made a number of important strides in 2012 to advance policy coherence on human rights mainstreaming across the UN system and strengthen the positioning of human rights within global development agendas. In February 2012, the UNDG endorsed a new strategy for the deployment of human rights advisers (human rights experts recruited and managed by OHCHR and working in the offices of UN Resident Coordinators) which was based on the needs and perspectives expressed by Resident Coordinators and UN agencies. This system-wide strategy will strengthen human rights policy coherence and system-wide ownership of
Impact of human rights mainstreaming work at country level

“Human rights are an area relevant to all, where everyone can feel they have their own interest and mandate. It has a very unifying impact.”
UN Resident Coordinator, Republic of Moldova

The Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by the General Assembly in 1986, laid the foundation of the UN's human rights-based approaches to development and provided its key elements, including: putting people at the centre of development; ensuring free, active and meaningful participation; securing non-discrimination; fair distribution of development benefits; and respecting self-determination and sovereignty over natural resources; all of which must take place within a process that advances other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The UN system plays a key role in supporting programme countries, at their request, in developing their national capacities to integrate human rights in national policies and fulfil their treaty obligations. Strong national ownership and leadership are essential foundations for developing national capacity and achieving rights-based development results. The human rights-based approach adds value to development efforts of all stakeholders by promoting the free, active and meaningful participation of beneficiaries; integrating the principles of accountability, non-discrimination and equality, striving for the economic and political empowerment of rights-holders; and strengthening coherence between international human rights standards and economic and development policies and programmes.

In Tanzania, the UNCT established a human rights working group, which is chaired by the Resident Coordinator, and provides strategic analysis and advisory services to the UNCT on a range of system-wide policy issues from a human rights perspective. In preparation for the UPR, 12 UN agencies provided substantive inputs to the UNCT compilation report on a wide variety of issues. The technical expertise of the working group is strongly valued by national counterparts. The group plays an important quality assurance role with regards to the mainstreaming of human rights in national programmes and policies, such as the National Human Rights Action Plan.

By integrating human rights into development, countries can better address the root causes of development challenges. Analyzing and understanding which groups have been excluded from development progress, and why, is an important step that must be taken by countries seeking to accelerate progress towards human rights and development goals. When a HRBA to development was applied in Botswana, it highlighted the importance of addressing discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS, refugees and people with disabilities and resulted in positive changes to the UNCT’s programming.

In Ecuador, the Government decided to apply a HRBA to its national development strategy and secured OHCHR’s assistance in developing planning tools based on human rights principles and standards. In the Republic of Moldova, with support from UNDP and UN Women, local governments applied a HRBA in the implementation of their decentralized governance strategies, which included a gender equality perspective. This resulted in better targeting of public resources to the most vulnerable groups and enhanced public participation in decision-making, leading to more sustainable results.

These experiences of the UN system reaffirm the notion that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In order to further strengthen UN capacity and coordinate support to meet the demands of Member States, OHCHR is leading the work of a dedicated Inter-agency support mechanism, called the United Nations Development Group Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism (UNDG-HRM). Eighteen agencies are actively collaborating under the UNDG-HRM to strengthen coherent support to Member States through the work of UNCTs and to catalyse more effective and systematic engagement with UN human rights mechanisms.

Furthermore, the Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One, commissioned by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly, indicated that this approach enhanced both country ownership and effective attention to cross-cutting issues, such as human rights and gender equality. In a survey conducted under the UNDG-HRM to determine the support needs of UNCTs in relation to human rights mainstreaming, UNCTs responded that a HRBA in the Delivering as One context “provides an exceptional framework for bringing together the different UN values and to take forward Inter-agency action which brings together the different UN mandates.”
human rights advisers, deployed at the request of Resident Coordinators and UNCTs. To date, a total of 27 UNCTs have requested human rights advisers – a strong indicator of country-level demand.

The UNDG-HRM also helped to strengthen the engagement of UNCTs and national partners with the UN’s human rights mechanisms. For instance, the UNDG-HRM facilitated the inputs of UNCTs to the Annual Meeting of the UN Special Rapporteurs in Geneva in June 2012, which highlighted the valuable contributions UNCTs can and do make to the work of special procedures, including through supporting field visits of mandate-holders and following up on their recommendations.

Moreover, an e-discussion on engaging with the UPR process consolidated over 91 contributions, including 50 from UNCTs, which underscored the many opportunities provided by the UPR process to engage with national partners on human rights. OHCHR provided substantive support to a UNDG-HRM knowledge management initiative to collect case studies and good practices on mainstreaming human rights in development practice. Over 30 case studies were submitted by UNCTs and agencies and a number of these will be included in a publication to be launched and distributed in 2013 to UN agencies and UNCTs.

Following OHCHR’s mainstreaming efforts, human rights were included as a cross-cutting issue in the new UN-HABITAT organigramme and its operational activities. On the issue of gender mainstreaming, OHCHR was one of eight UN pilot agencies which led the development of common standards on gender mainstreaming – the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (SWAP). After the endorsement of the SWAP by the UN Chief Executive Board for Coordination in April 2012, OHCHR assisted other UN agencies to comply with these standards. The International Telecommunication Union was the first agency to solicit OHCHR’s assistance in this regard.

At the Human Rights Council, a panel on mainstreaming has become an annual event, mandated by the outcome of the review of the Council (A/HRC/RES/16/21). The first such panel took place at the 19th session of the Council on March 2012 with the theme “mainstreaming in the area of development as well as on cooperation in human rights mainstreaming at the national level.”

At the country level, OHCHR continued to support the integration of human rights and recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), UN joint programmes, humanitarian activities, as well as in a number of UNCT thematic working groups and mechanisms, in over 36 countries in all regions.

For example, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) approved anti-corruption programmes, including significant human rights provisions. In Azerbaijan, human rights are incorporated in all main programmes of the UNCT. In Yemen, OHCHR has engaged with the UNCT to mainstream protection issues into its programmes and developed a project to strengthen the capacities of national actors to monitor and respond to human rights violations as part of the preparations for the 2013 Consolidated Appeals Project. In Togo, OHCHR has been leading the UN’s efforts to integrate human rights into the UNDAF 2014-2018, the Government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II (2013-2017) and their respective implementation plans. In Kenya, the Office developed Terms of Reference for 19 UN agency human rights focal points, which was adopted by the UNCT. In Bolivia, OHCHR contributed to a joint project on the right of indigenous peoples to consultation, funded by the UN Indigenous Peoples’ Partnership, which has helped to bring indigenous peoples’ issues to the forefront of the public agenda. In Myanmar, the Office and the UNCT initiated and co-organized the first Human Rights Day celebration in Yangon since 1998, which brought together Government ministers and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Last but not least, the Pacific Regional 2013-2017 Common
Country Assessment and UNDAF documents included significant human rights provisions which drew extensively from the recommendations issued by the UPR and human rights treaty bodies in relation to 14 countries in the region and emphasized the need to align governance with international human rights norms and standards.

Challenges and lessons learned

In 2012, OHCHR advocated with success on development issues in intergovernmental and Inter-agency forums. OHCHR also breathed life into and helped sustain the UNDG-HRM in its initial year, pending the receipt of donor contributions for the UNDG-HRM Multi-Partner Trust Fund. However, deeply entrenched resistance to human rights positions remain in many intergovernmental and Inter-agency forums. Gains such as those outlined above need to be vigorously and consistently defended in order to become sustainable. Highlighting the instrumental importance and empirically verifiable results of a human rights-based approach is an important part of a successful strategy without selling short the more fundamental and intrinsic importance of human rights.

The affirmation of the centrality of human rights to sustainable development at Rio+20 constitutes a welcome first step towards a more just and ambitious post-2015 development agenda, anchored in a clearer and stronger accountability framework. There is momentum and expectation within and outside the UN on the central role that human rights should play in related deliberations. UN agencies and civil society partners are already placing a high demand on OHCHR to provide human rights expertise and strengthen advocacy on key human rights issues. OHCHR will need to meet the challenge of consolidating and building upon its 2012 achievements in a climate of reduced budgetary resources. OHCHR will focus on positioning the UNDG-HRM to the most strategic effect as part of its response to these challenges.
“Freedom from fear and want” in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

As we approach 2015, the end-date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an ambitious new global deal is needed which is grounded in the principles of human rights, equality and sustainability. Its ultimate objective should be to realize the international human rights commitments of United Nations Member States and build upon the important human rights agreements outlined in the 2010 MDGs Review Summit and 2012 Rio+20 outcome documents. The United Nations Secretary-General’s Task Team on the Post-2015 Agenda, of which OHCHR is an active member, identified human rights as one of the three fundamental principles for the post-2015 framework, along with equality and sustainability.

The formulation and implementation of the MDGs have fallen short on a number of important fronts. These include: an unbalanced development framework; poor specification of the global goals, targets and indicators; inappropriate adaptation of global goals to the national level; non-participatory processes; weak accountability for both process and outcomes; and the failure to address discrimination and increasing inequalities. Neither the content nor the implementation of the MDGs have been explicitly aligned with international human rights standards and principles. In March 2010, the Secretary-General concluded that “shortfalls have occurred not because the goals are unreachable, or because time is too short. We are off course because of unmet commitments, inadequate resources and a lack of focus and accountability.”

Human rights are solemn legal obligations of Member States, inalienable entitlements of people everywhere, and must be a cornerstone for any new development framework. Human rights demands are being voiced strongly and consistently in post-2015 consultations at global and national levels. The post-2015 development agenda must not repeat the MDG’s shortcomings and must: (1) be a global, comprehensive and balanced agenda that applies to all universally; (2) give a true meaning to ‘freedom from fear and want’ and be aligned with and grounded in all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; (3) address pervasive inequalities, collect both quantitative and qualitative data and dismantle discrimination; (4) be built on strong accountability mechanisms, which strengthen political commitments and improve incentives for fair delivery; (5) ensure people can participate in decisions that affect them, without fear of repression; and (6) ensure that policies across different sectors are coherent at the national and international levels with human rights standards and principles as the yardstick.

OHCHR will continue its research and advocacy efforts, in partnership with Member States, the UN and civil society actors, to ensure that these strategic priorities are prominently reflected within consultations and preparations undertaken in relation to the post-2015 development agenda.