

Kampala Communiqué of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions

19 November 2007
Protea Hotel, Kampala, Uganda

Communiqué

Recognising the significant role that National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) play in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms; and following the outcome of the conference of NHRIs and other human rights related bodies in the Commonwealth such as Ombudsman institutions at the Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, London, from 26 to 28 February 2007; the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (C-NHRI) met at Protea Hotel, Kampala on 19th November 2007 to consider, *inter alia*, the report of the Steering Committee which was put in place to recommend the modus operandi of the Forum and other matters incidental thereto.

The meeting brought together commissioners and senior officials from the participating institutions drawn from 26 Commonwealth countries, international partner institutions including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNDP. Delegates shared experiences and good practices in monitoring, protecting and advocating for human rights including the use of international, regional and national systems and identified constraints and challenges faced by national human rights institutions in the Commonwealth.

The meeting was officially opened by the Commonwealth Secretary General, the Rt. Hon Don McKinnon. The Uganda's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon Sam Kutesa also addressed the meeting. The meeting considered and discussed the report of the Steering Committee which was tasked to determine the Forum's mandate and objectives, its scope and nature. The Secretary General also launched the Comparative Study on NHRIs.

The meeting welcomed the establishment of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions in February 2007 in London as an informal and inclusive body of Commonwealth NHRIs and other national accountability mechanisms having a human rights mandate, the primary purpose of which would be to support the broad objectives of promoting networking, sharing of information, experiences and best practices, encouraging countries to establish *Paris Principles*-compliant NHRIs, and assisting national institutions to fulfill their mandated activities. The Forum is also intended to complement and support, and not to duplicate, the activities of ICC, OHCHR, and other existing regional coordinating or accreditation bodies but to serve as a platform for strengthening the capacity of national human rights

institutions to protect and promote human rights in the Commonwealth. In this context, they call on Commonwealth governments and other international and regional partners to support the Forum and the work of its members at national level

The Forum reaffirmed the need for all national human rights institutions in the Commonwealth to respect and function in conformity with the Paris Principles. The strengthening of co-operation between national institutions in the Commonwealth, and between national institutions, regional bodies and international partners such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and protect human rights at national level was also affirmed by the Forum.

The Forum adopted the report of the Steering Committee and agreed that the main objectives of the Forum will include:

- 1 Promoting increased access, dialogue and interaction with Commonwealth Heads of Government especially during their meetings (CHOGM);
- 2 Promoting interaction and dialogue among NHRIs, and with regional bodies and members of civil society, at and within other NHRI gatherings and the UN human rights mechanisms;
- 3 Coordinating and allowing for collective expressions of support, encouragement or concern, in relation to particular events and developments affecting C-NHRIs individually or collectively, for the better defence and promotion of human rights;
- 4 Promoting compliance with the *Paris Principles* taking into account the ICC accreditation process, including through encouraging and supporting the process towards establishment of NHRIs in line with the *Paris Principles*;
- 5 Complementing and supporting the work of HRU in promoting human rights in the Commonwealth.

Recommendations

- 1 We call upon Commonwealth Heads of Government to strengthen NHRIS through increased funding, timely implementation of their recommendations and establishment of mechanisms of engagement.
- 2 We call upon Commonwealth Heads of Government for adequate support

including funding for Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

- 3 We call upon Commonwealth Heads of Government to grant full recognition and participation of the Forum in CHOGM processes and related activities.

The Forum noted with appreciation the expression of support by the Office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (and other partner organisations) towards Commonwealth national human rights institutions to assist them to effectively carry out their mandates.

The Forum expressed appreciation to the Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Uganda Human Rights Commission for their hospitality and support throughout the course of the meeting.

Dated this 19 day of November 2007 at Protea Hotel, Kampala, Uganda