

**35TH SESSION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR
TECHNICAL COOPERATION. GENEVA, 31 OCTOBER - 3 NOVEMBER 2011**

BRIEFING AND INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH MEMBER STATES

Palais des Nations, XXIII, 3 NOVEMBER 2011

SPEAKING NOTES OF THE CHAIRPERSON

- On behalf of the Board of Trustees for the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation (VFTC), I welcome you to the briefing and interactive dialogue with Member States.

- This event concludes the formal proceedings of the 34th and 35th sessions of the Board. The 34th session of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the field of human rights (VFTC) took place in Burundi from 26 to 27 April 2011 and in Kenya from 28 to 29 April 2011. The 35th session has been held in Geneva this week from the 31 October to 3 November.

- It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Trustees serving on this Board:
 - Mr. William Schabas (Canada/Ireland);
 - Mr. Sozar Subari (Georgia);
 - Ms. Fatimata Mbaye (Mauritania);
 - Ms. Deepika Udagama (Sri Lanka); and
 - Myself, Ms. Monica Pinto (Argentina); the Chairperson of the Board.

- The Board of Trustees has been operational since 1993 and its members are appointed by the Secretary-General for a three-year renewable term. The Board's mandate is to assist the Secretary-General in streamlining and rationalizing the working methods and procedures of the Technical Cooperation Programme. It meets twice a year and reports on its work to the Secretary-General and the Human Rights Council.

- It is an established practice that during its session, the Board, in a spirit of transparency and cooperation, meets with Member States in order to brief them on its

work and exchange views on issues of common interest and relevance to the Technical Cooperation Programme of OHCHR.

- For this year's sessions, the Board built on its previous experience with a continued exploration of various components of the UN Human Rights Programme on Technical Cooperation funded by the VFTC, with a view to providing policy guidance and advice on the technical cooperation activities carried out by the Office.

- Last April, for the first time in the history of the VFTC Board, a session was organized outside Geneva. The field mission provided the Board with a reality check regarding the real needs of the field presences and enabled the Board to receive first hand insights and a realistic approach to the use of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation funds in terms of achievements, thematic priorities, constraints and challenges. The Board discussed technical cooperation activities by OHCHR presence in Burundi, activities by the Regional Human Rights Adviser for the Great Lakes, as well as activities by the Human Rights Adviser (HRA) in Kenya. The Board also met with different national authorities, UN partners, diplomatic mission and civil society organizations in Burundi and Kenya. The Board received also an overview of the human rights situation in the different parts of Somalia. In this regard, the Board noted severe constraints of access and movement in Somalia, more specifically in Mogadishu and South/Central Somalia due to security conditions. The human rights situation in this country clearly remained extremely challenging. The Board expresses its concern with regard to the on-going violation of human rights and call on Members States to commit more to help addressing the urgent needs of the civilian population.

- During the field visit, the Board discussed different transitional justice programmes/mechanisms established in Burundi, Kenya and Somalia. The Board shared some of the concerns on transitional justice and the challenge is to ensure that the right issues are being addressed. In this regards, the Board noted that a sustainable approach with institutional building is fundamental to ensure that a strong justice system is in place, taking into consideration the specific dynamics of the country. The Board was also briefed on different thematic priorities developed by the visited countries, including thematic strategies related to combatting impunity and strengthening the rule of law; the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights; the promotion of

democracy and good governance; and the strengthening of cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms, and national human rights institutions.

- The Board is of the view that this first field visit was very fruitful and that it should followed by similar sessions in others countries.
- During the 35th session, the Board was updated on OHCHR's 2012-2013 Management Plan in particular with regard to thematic priorities and the streamlining of the planning process as well as the ongoing OHCHR performance monitoring system.
- The Board was also briefed on recent developments in technical cooperation of importance to OHCHR, particularly the Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution on the enhancement of technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights adopted at its 18th session and sponsored by Thailand. The Board also had a meeting with the Thai Ambassador to discuss this resolution and its role in this regard.
- The Board also received an update on the operationalization of FOTCD's approach to Technical Cooperation.
- The Board received a debriefing on the revised thematic strategy on impunity, rule of law and democratic societies and the thematic strategy on violence and insecurity. It was also debriefed on thematic strategies related to poverty and economic, social and cultural rights and migration.
- The Board was updated on the overall financial status of OHCHR and its donors, the 2011 financial situation of the VFIC, its functioning in the overall funding system, including inter-linkages with other extra-budgetary resources. The Board reiterated its support of the continued policy to finance Human Rights Advisors (HRAs) within UN Country Teams, human rights components of UN peace missions and country offices through the VFIC. The Board was informed that the shortfall of funding for the VFIC has increased this year while expenses related to on-going activities are expected to increase at the same time. The Board is of the view that the continued on-going global

financial crisis should not alter commitment to human rights and encourages Members States to increase their contribution to the fund.

- The Board was updated on the field presences in all the regions and the implementation of activities funded by the VFTC in the framework of the OHCHR Management Plan, the successes achieved, the partnerships on the ground with civil society, governments, UN partners and UNCT. The Board was also informed of the strategies being developed to address the challenges being faced including in the regions of Africa, Middle East & North Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, North America and Central Asia, Latin America and Caribbean region.
- The Board was updated on the follow up of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the related trust funds. In this regard, the Board received a status report of field presences' involvement with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the recommendations that were proposed along with follow up actions being undertaken.
- The Board was briefed on the situation of HR components of UN peace Missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Guinea Bissau. It also received briefings on the situation of HRAs in Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, Great Lakes, Madagascar, Chad, and on the situation of country offices in Togo, Uganda and Guinea. The Board acknowledged the challenges faced in all these different countries and welcomed the achievements made in the field.
- The Board received an overview on the situation of human rights in Field Presences in Middle East and North Africa region. This region is in the midst of historic change with series of protests and demonstrations that have resulted in the change of regimes in a number of countries. The Board hopes for a peaceful and democratic future in the region.
- The Board was briefed on the situation of the country office in Mauritania, the newly established office in Tunisia and the special situation of the stand-alone office in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The Board welcomed the efforts done in this region despite all the challenges and difficulties faced.

- The Board expressed its satisfaction for the real impact made by the work done in the Asia Pacific region. The Board was briefed on the situation of HR components of UN peace Missions in Afghanistan and Timor-Leste and on the situation of the Human Rights Advisers in Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka. The Board was also informed of the strategies and thematic focus areas developed by the Asia Pacific region for the next biennium.
- The Board proposed to enlarge the number of contributing Member States with additional countries from the Asia Pacific and Middle East and North Africa region.
- The Board noted the recent developments in the field presences of the Europe and Central Asian region as well as the challenges, including political, human, financial and administrative constraints, in the implementation of priorities in the region. With regard to the financial situation, the Board was informed that work across this richly diverse region had been designed to fit within the constraints. The Board was also updated on the activities of the Stand-alone office in Kosovo, the situation of HRAs in South Caucasus (Georgia), Moldova, Russian Federation, and Ukraine and the important work done in the region in relation to thematic issues.
- The Board was briefed on the situation of the HR component of the UN peace mission in Haiti; on the situation of Human Rights Advisers HRAs in Ecuador, Nicaragua and Paraguay, and on the situation of country offices in Bolivia and Mexico. The Board acknowledged the challenges faced in all these different countries and welcomed the achievements made in the field. The Board was also updated on the thematic priorities developed by the Americas region for the next biennium.
- The Board received an overview of OHCHR work in human rights components in peace missions, their functions, activities, challenges, in particular with regard to providing support to different Commission of Inquiries. The Board appreciated the work undertaken by the Section covering the work in humanitarian crisis, rapid response, UN peace missions support and human rights components including early warning and recruitment of human rights officers within UN peace missions. The Board was briefed on what kind of capacity and institution building can be done in UN peace missions, especially with regard to specific mission's phase.

- The Board was updated on the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI's) related issues, including the legal and technical assistance provided to NHRIs and the Accreditation Subcommittee of the International Coordinating Committee of NHRIs (ICC), including regional trends and Regional Mechanisms follow-up. The Board noted the importance of ensuring true independence of NHRIs as well as the strategic value of developing and investing in NHRIs as part of UN efforts to strengthen national human rights protection systems. The Board was updated on the fellowship programme through which "A status" NHRI staff members are selected to work in OHCHR for six months in order to gain knowledge of and experience with the United Nations human rights system. The Board recognized and emphasized the strategic importance of the cooperation between OHCHR and UNDP at country level by all types of UN human rights field presences and stressed the value of partnership with regional human rights mechanisms. The Board welcomed and was encouraged by the strategic value and partnership with NHRIs and by on-going efforts to strengthen the collaborative efforts between the NHRIs and UNDP in advancing the mandate of OHCHR.
- The Board also received presentations from the Human Rights Council and Special Procedures Division on the latest developments with regard the end of the UPR first cycle, process and achievements, the new modalities adopted by the Human Rights Council for the Second UPR Cycle and the follow-up to UPR recommendations. The board was also updated on the 18th Annual Meeting of Special Procedures mandate holders with regard to progress made to reinforce each other's recommendations and promote synergies among human rights mechanisms, including through cross referencing, joint meetings on thematic issues and country situations and joint advocacy. The Board was informed that there are currently 44 mandates supported by OHCHR including 6 working groups. The board was also briefed on the 4 new thematic mandates and 2 counties mandates.
- On a personal note, I would like to inform you that the terms of Professor William Schabas and me will be expiring at the end of this year. I would like to express my gratitude for all the support extended to us by you throughout the past 6 years.

- I would also like to inform you that the representatives from OHCHR's Donors and External Relations Section, the finance and budget section as well as the Director of OHCHR's Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division and the Chiefs of OHCHR's geographic branches and sections are present with us today and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

- I thank you.