**Human Rights Council**

**Panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming**

**28 February 2012, 09:00-11:15**

**Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva, Switzerland**

Concept note

**Background**

As part of its mandate established by General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Human Rights Council should play an important role in promoting the effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the UN system. In this context, the Council decided in the Outcome of the review of the work and functioning of the Council (A/HRC/RES/16/21) to “*hold a half-day panel discussion once a year to interact with heads of governing bodies and secretariats of United Nations agencies and funds within their respective mandates on specific human rights themes with the objective of promoting the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system*”. Accordingly, the first panel discussion will be held on 28 February 2012 from 10:00 to 13:00 hours during the high-level segment of the nineteenth session of the Council.

Promoting the respect for all human rights is a fundamental purpose of the UN under the Charter. All UN agencies, organizations, funds and programmes have thus been contributing directly and indirectly towards the realization of human rights within the framework of their specific mandates. The mainstreaming of human rights within the UN system has consequently been a central feature of various UN reform programmes over the last decade. Member States have also strongly supported UN’s efforts of human rights mainstreaming including at the 2005 World Summit, where Heads of States reaffirmed that human rights, development and peace and security were three interlinked pillars of the UN and explicitly supported the further integration of human rights into the work of the UN system, as well as into their respective national policies. Indeed, as stated by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, there is virtually no aspect of the UN work which does not have a human rights dimension.

This first high-level panel discussion will focus on human rights mainstreaming in the area of development as well as on cooperation in human rights mainstreaming at the national level. In the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development and the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action, development is recognized both as a human right in itself as well as an integral part of all human rights, contributing to their full enjoyment by all. Promoting and protecting human rights has an impact on a wide range of issues, including on development. In that sense, the September 2010 High Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) recognised that human rights were “essential for accelerating progress toward achieving the MDGs”.

Close collaboration between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN entities in recent years has helped to promote better awareness and more coherent responses to meet the development needs of Member States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. Such support has for instance translated in assistance to national systems of human rights protection, national capacity-building, technical cooperation, human rights education and training, as well as other activities. At the same time, mainstreaming of human rights in development activities by the UN system has contributed to better and sustainable development outcomes by helping stakeholders to focus on reducing disparities and enhancing equality, non-discrimination and participation, which constitute key factors in addressing development challenges.

**Objectives of the panel**

* Assess the progress, achievements and challenges in mainstreaming human rights in the work of the UN system, with a particular focus on how this may impact positively the development efforts;
* Promote a better awareness of resources and capacity available to assist and support, within the respective mandates of each various UN entities, the implementation of human rights obligations and commitments by Member States, upon their request;
* Discuss ways and means to enhance synergies between all UN agencies, organizations, funds and programmes in order to effectively meet the demands of States related to the formulation and implementation of their national development and human rights policies;
* Facilitate dialogue and sharing of experiences between the Human Rights Council and the UN system on policy coherence and country-level impact of human rights mainstreaming;
* Discuss how cooperative approaches by States in facing human rights challenges may attract further cooperation, support and assistance by the international community and how this may produce positive results on the ground.

**Modalities of the panel**

The panel will be held on 28 February 2012 during the High-level segment of the nineteenth session of the Council for three hours. It will be chaired by the President of the Council and opened by the UN Secretary-General. In addition, panellists will be invited to make short presentations, with particular emphasis on the impact of efforts to mainstream human rights within their respective agency mandates or particular aspects thereof.

* President of the Human Rights Council (Chair)
* UN Secretary General (opening statement through video message)
* High Commissioner for Human Rights (opening statement)
* Mr. Jordan Ryan, Assistant Administrator and Director of Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (panellist)
* Dr. Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General for Family, Women's and Children's Health, World Health Organization (WHO) (panellist)
* Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier, Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, United Nations Children´s Fund (UNICEF) (panellist)
* Ms. Constance Thomas, Director, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, International Labour Organization (ILO) (panellist)
* Ms. Siobhan McInerney-Lankford, Senior Policy Officer, Operation Policy and Country Services, The World Bank (panellist)
* Ms. Barbara Ekwall, Senior Officer, Agricultural Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (panellist)

**Key points to be made by the panellists**

* **UN Secretary General (video message):** Human rights as the foundation of the UN Charter and a core responsibility for all Member States and the UN system; normative and operational imperatives for human rights mainstreaming in the UN system; deepening the focus on prevention as a key pillar of the Secretary-General’s Five-Year Action Agenda.
* **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (opening statement):** progress in integrating human rights in the work of the UN system as supported by Member States at the 2005 World Summit; opportunities for further integration of human rights in the forthcoming global development agenda under the Rio+20, Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and post-2015 development agenda; the value of the standard setting work of the Council for UN development assistance on the ground; OHCHR’s leadership efforts to coordinate and institutionalize human rights mainstreaming in the UN system’s work in order to better respond to requests from Member States to support their national efforts; and mainstreaming the right to development in the UN system and promoting coherence across various organs of the UN.
* **UNDP**: Mandate and role of UNDP as a development agency in contributing to human rights, with emphasis on national ownership and strengthening national capacities; work of UNDP in supporting, inter alia, the strengthening of national institutions, harmonization of national legislation with international human rights standards, and national engagement with UN human rights mechanisms including the UPR process; demystification of human rights and efforts needed to further integrate economic, social and cultural rights into development processes; and efforts to strengthen policy coherence and coordinated support to meet the needs of programme countries.
* **WHO:** Mandate of WHO to promote the right to health as established in its 1946 constitution; efforts to further strengthen institutional approach, in the current context of WHO reforms, to support Member States in implementing the treaty obligations; supporting the work of UN human rights mechanisms in the areas of the rights to health, water and food; partnership with OHCHR and building on each other’s comparative strengths to advance thematic work and country support; mainstreaming human rights in national health sector strategic plan as an important roadmap for the realization of the right to health.
* **UNICEF**: Mandate and role of UNICEF, in particular children’s rights; lessons and added value of a human rights-based approach from UNICEF’s work in development programming and advocacy; examples of UNICEF programmes supporting national efforts on human rights that led to concrete development outcomes; the role and contributions of UNICEF in enhancing coordination, policy coherence and synergies within the UN system in order to effectively respond to the needs on the ground, according to the priorities established by the States themselves (i.e. the “Delivering as One” initiative).
* **ILO:** Mandate and the tripartite structure of ILO in promoting and mainstreaming human rights including ILO Conventions and standards; specific examples of programmes/activities through which human rights are mainstreamed (i.e. International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour); and promoting the respect of fundamental rights and principles in the labour area (employment, social protection network, etc.) in improving the well-being of the people and of a country as a whole.
* **FAO:** Strategy, policy and mechanism in place to promote and strengthen respect for the human rights to food; lessons learned and added value of a human rights approach from its work in the fields of food security and food assistance; cooperating with concretely with OHCHR to provide a human rights dimension in the FAO programmes and addressing food crises as a human rights issue; cooperation between FAO and States on human rights activities leading to concrete development outcomes.
* **World Bank**: Legal and policy framework for the World Bank’s engagement on human rights; the Bank’s capacity building efforts on human rights through the Nordic Trust Fund established in 2009 as a ‘knowledge and learning initiative’; and experience in engaging the private sector in development projects relevant to human rights and the work of the International Financial Corporation (IFC).