

Contribution to the inter-sessional meeting on technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights

Text of UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines, GUSTAVO GONZALEZ - Video Message

Good morning, good afternoon members of the Council and thank you for your interest in the Philippines.

In the Philippines we put the UN reform in motion when we were asked to address allegations of serious human rights violations outlined in a 2020 report of the High Commissioner.

The model of “an empowered Resident Coordinator System” allowed me to offer my good offices to conduct consultations and build consensus with the government, member states and civil society on the way forward.

The Philippines and Iceland played a remarkable role in Geneva negotiating and shaping a resolution under item 10, calling for technical cooperation.

Let me share 5 points related to this experience:

Number One: To my knowledge, resolution 45/33 is the first resolution which provided a clear mandate to the Resident Coordinator.

The Resident Coordinator is asked three tasks

- a. to pool the capacities and knowledge of the UN Country Team for technical cooperation,
- b. to establish a “UN Joint Programme”, as the preferred modality for technical cooperation and, finally,
- c. to report to the Council on progress made by the UN Joint Programme in a two years-period.

I believe that giving such specific mandate to the Resident Coordinator was the most effective way of having the UN as part of the solution.

It also made the process more transparent and facilitated the role of the RC in building consensus amongst the parties, selecting those UN agencies to be part of technical cooperation, mobilizing the required resources and keeping everyone -civil society, the diplomatic community and the Council- informed about progress.

Number Two: The resolution made the most of the UN reform process by calling for a “UN joint programme on human rights”.

The modality of a Joint Programme allows for a more integrated, cost-effective and coordinated approach to technical cooperation.

A Joint Programme brings together UN agencies around a single work plan, a common budget, a common monitoring system and a unified Steering Committee, which is co-chaired by a senior representative of the government -in our case it is the Secretary of Justice- and the UN Resident Coordinator.

It simplifies reporting and offers the Government with one single voice.

A UN Joint Programmes also allows to share risks amongst UN agencies but also to bring the best out of them in a coordinated manner.

In addition, UN Joint Program are structured around a single mechanisms for resource mobilization and management.

It also facilitates coordination amongst resource partners.

As of today, we have 8 resource partners supporting the programme from a single platform. Two of them represents all donors in the Steering Committee.

Number three: Technical cooperation was organized from a “problem-solving perspective” rather than as a general capacity development.

In the case of the Philippines, the programme is structured based on the “six main areas of concerned” identified by the High Commissioner in her 2020 report.

Six problems, six proposed solutions.

This problem-solving approach brings a natural sense of urgency in our actions because we focus on what really matters.

The approach also facilitate more inter-ministerial interaction and more interdisciplinary work.

A problem-solving approach helps us recalling that technical cooperation is coming from a Council resolution -engaging all of us- rather than from a simple demand.

Number four: Inclusiveness.

We know that human rights is a broad area of work, which brings together a great diversity of actors, with different expectations, agendas and responsibility.

In this sense, technical cooperation in human rights is expected to go beyond a simple exchange of experts between the UN and the national counterpart.

Engaging research centers, universities, civil society organizations and the private sector in the implementation was one of our main objectives.

But “inclusiveness” is by nature a political process as it relates to players, roles and responsibilities. It should come as part of a consensus building process.

In the case of the Philippines, civil society is present in all the six working groups and they are also represented at the Steering Committee.

It took time, I have to confess, but the investment in inclusion pays off as it gives a great sense of national ownership.

Number five: Catalytic financial resources.

This is one of the aspects that did not work as expected and remains a lesson for the future.

Catalytic financial resources are very much needed to ensure a rapid setting up of the programme.

I believe the Council should think about “start-up” or “catalytic” contributions -maybe under the form of a dedicated trust fund- that can be used for the installation of the project, while we wait from voluntary contributions.

The new President of the Philippines said at the UN general Assembly last September that “the UN Joint programmes on Human Rights is an example of partnership between a sovereign country and the UN”.

As a UN, we are proud of being part of the solutions.

Thank you.