Final Statement

International Conference on "International Solidarity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Pivotal Importance of SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions"

Cairo, 27-28 February 2022

***SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.**

The Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRI) and the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) in the State of Qatar, in cooperation with the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) in Egypt, the League of Arab States, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), held the International Conference on International Conference on "International Solidarity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Pivotal Importance of SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" in Cairo, from 27-28 February 2022. The conference was attended by experts and representatives of all 15 NHRIs that are ANNHRI members, a number of representatives of NHRIs that are GANHRI members, the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), representatives of the Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR), the Arab Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), representatives of the Arab League and the host country (Egypt), as well as representatives of statistics institutions and organizations, parliamentarians, human rights institutes, international and national organizations, civil society organizations, academia, and development partners.

This Conference aims at encouraging Arab countries to achieve further progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by providing resources and developing and implementing plans in partnership with the various development sectors. Some international reports showed that the Arab region, despite the progress made in some areas, still needs further work to achieve SDGs by 2030.

During the conference, experts, specialists and representatives of the participating institutions presented working papers that dealt with the role of NHRIs and United Nations agencies in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They also reviewed experiences from the region, and the pivotal importance of SDG 16 in relation to democracy, governance, transparency and anti-corruption, as well as the role of sustainable development statistics and indicators to measure

SDG 16 and the importance of cooperation and interaction between NHRIs, civil society and statistics authorities.

In the context of the opening remarks, presented working papers, interactions and discussions, the participants emphasized a number of basic principles related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG16, in the context of the Arab region:

1. Citizen "as a human being" must be the compass of governments when implementing SDGs. There is no value in achieving high economic growth rates if such growth is not accompanied by economic, social and cultural empowerment of individuals, ensuring the enjoyment of civil and political rights, and enabling them to freely express their opinions and to participate actively in decision-making.
2. Development is indivisible, and SDGs are interconnected so that one cannot be achieved without the other. However, there is an awareness of the pivotal importance of SDG 16 as a central goal that lays the foundations of the achievement of other SDGs, and given that development cannot be achieved without achieving political stability, security and peace, consolidating democracy, linking political systems with their societies, and addressing armed conflicts.
3. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is perfectly a human rights agenda, and it mostly uses the same human rights tools and methodologies that NHRIS use in monitoring, reporting, measurement and reporting.
4. It is of paramount importance to involve HNRIs in monitoring, measuring and reporting on the 2030 Agenda as one of the levers and guarantees for achieving the Agenda at the State level, while promoting the role of HNRIs as one of the early warning mechanisms in identifying the main causes of human rights violations and the marginalization of individuals in their societies.
5. Serving the citizen and securing his needs is the compass that guides governance when setting plans and distributing the budget. Moreover, it is also more important that this is reflected in the services provided to the citizen, such as health, education, housing, while providing a decent life and sufficient share of income without discrimination, and achieving equality and social justice in a manner that preserves citizen's human dignity. Besides, the government sector must be a partner in the struggle to achieve rights and integrated with other stakeholders.
6. Stability and development of the region as a whole requires imposing a political path that allows for the settlement of the Palestinian Cause by ending the occupation and the Israeli apartheid regime against the Palestinians in all their places of residence, enabling the Palestinian people of the right to self-determination on their land, exploiting their natural resources, developing their national economy and bring about development. This will only be achieved if the international community assumes its legal

and moral responsibilities and effectively intervenes in order to end and lift the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip and put pressure on the occupation authorities to compel them to respect the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as the importance of activating international accountability tools.

7. The continued existence of armed conflicts, hotbeds of tension and the spread of terrorism and violent extremism is worrisome and an obstacle to development. It is also a violation of the right to development and the right to life. This entails concerted efforts to address the roots and causes of conflicts and to strengthen Arab judicial cooperation as one of the keys to confronting the crime of terrorism, along with the joint action to end the ongoing armed conflicts in the region.
8. It is imperative to work on all targets of SDG 16, to prevent violence and torture; to promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all; all types of crime, including human trafficking, corruption and bribery and to limit the flows of contraband; to ensure the protection of rights and freedoms; to ensure strong, effective, transparent and accountable institutions; and ensure public access to information, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

The conference papers and opening remarks included many recommendations, foremost of which are as follows:

1. **Continue the implementation of the recommendations of ANNHRI Conference held in Sharm El-Sheikh on 26-27 June 2019 on the "Role of NHRIs in implementation & follow-up implementation of the SDGs," while considering them an integral part of the recommendations of this conference, and taking them into account with action plans to implement the recommendations of this conference.**
2. Encourage NHRIs to play an effective role at the national level in achieving SDGs, especially SDG16, through partnerships with stakeholders, NGOs and civil society in the Arab region in the implementation and follow-up processes, and effective contribution to technical and sectoral committees in order to stimulate the implementation of SDGs.
3. Integrate SDGs into NHRIs strategies and annual reports, and NHRIs must work to link the database of complaints they receive to SDGs indicators.
4. Ensure cooperation among stakeholders to create the real political will for effective and well-managed government departments so as to address the root causes of the challenges that impede SDGs achievement; to reinforce the space available for civil society to transition to just, peaceful and inclusive societies; and to urge governments to strengthen democracy, freedom of opinion and expression, and combating and preventing torture.

5. Bolster the efforts exerted by NHRIs in the field of raising awareness about SDGs by boosting cooperation between NHRIs, official and civil bodies in order to implement the contents of the Arab Plan for Human Rights Education adopted by the League of Arab States 2022-2026 and the World Programme for Human Rights Education, and to make use of the opportunities provided in the 2030 Agenda, in cooperation with the United Nations, especially the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre.
6. The participating parties in the Conference, each within its area of competence and mandate, must seek to provide advice and technical support to governments in order to prepare and implement national action plans that take into account emerging issues in the field of human rights, especially with regard to climate change, violent extremism, artificial intelligence and cyber-attacks .
7. Support Palestinians to approach the International Criminal Court to implement the principle of accountability and seeking justice in Palestine, while supporting the Commission of Inquiry formed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in the wake of the last May aggression by the occupying state. It is also imperative to reject the decision of the occupying authorities to label six Palestinian human rights, civil society and development institutions as "terrorist organizations," and provide all possible support to the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights and Palestinian civil society institutions.
8. In partnership with relevant international and regional institutions, ANNHRI shall continue to build the capacities of Arab NHRIs in the field of implementing and measuring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, monitoring progress in its implementation, and facilitating the exchange of experiences in this field.
9. NHRIs shall play their role to support the implementation of SDGs by reviewing the legislative framework so that they are aligned with international human rights standards in response to SDGs. Thus, this will lead to drawing up public policies, analyzing their response to SDGs, monitoring the existence of effective NHRIs and the nature of their performance, and presenting a human rights vision, as well as developing national reports within indicators capable of evaluating the reality.
10. Raise awareness of the role of NHRIs in observing human rights during elections, by activating the systematic handbook produced by ANNHRI in cooperation with UNDP on human rights monitoring in the context of the electoral process; urging and striving for more inclusive elections; addressing violence against women and minorities during the electoral process; and expanding participation to ensure the participation of women and youth and access to leadership positions.
11. Encourage NHRIs to cooperate with the central statistical agencies in their countries and to establish MoU to provide quality statistical data that are responsive to the indicators of the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially data on vulnerable or disadvantaged groups at risk of being left behind.

12. Encourage NHRIs to promote freedom of expression and association in their countries and to monitor civic space with a view to prevent any attempt to restrict it. On the other hand, it is imperative to encourage NHRIs to promote justice, accountability and the rule of law and to engage the government and judiciary in combating impunity.
13. Encourage Arab States to work on updating statistical legislation in line with the changes, developments and emerging issues, particularly in the field of SDGs, marginalized groups, and human rights.
14. Encourage central statistical bodies in the Arab countries to open up to the private sector, civil society, NHRIs and all partners in the process of providing data related to the Agenda for Sustainable Development and filling statistical gaps in this regard.
15. Encourage NHRIs to activate the Arab Network for Legal and Judicial Cooperation in the Field of Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime as one of the mechanisms under the umbrella of the League of Arab States.
16. Encourage international and regional organizations participating as partners in the Conference to work on the capacity- building of judicial authorities in terms of optimal use of modern technology in judiciary and facilitating access to justice for litigants.
17. Urge countries to develop national plans for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Security and Peace, and the relevant Security Council resolutions related to women and youth, and to provide the necessary resources to implement those plans.
18. Encourage NHRIs to engage in mechanisms and arrangements for national reconciliation and transitional justice, whenever necessary.

At the end of the conference, the participants would like to thank the Arab Republic of Egypt, the organizing bodies, ANNHRI, NHRC in Qatar, NCHR in Egypt, the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, OHCHR, and UNDP for the kind reception, hosting and facilitation of the work of this conference.

The End

Egypt- Cairo

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