



# Strategic Plan 2016 – 2019

Promoting and Protecting Human Rights  
in all Regions of the Commonwealth

## About us

The Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) is an informal and inclusive body of Commonwealth National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and other national accountability mechanisms with a human rights mandate. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) play an important role in ensuring that internationally accepted human rights standards result in improved enjoyment of human rights on the ground within their respective countries.

The mandate of the CFNHRI is to promote networking, sharing of information, experiences and best practices, encouraging countries to establish Paris Principle-compliant NHRIs, and assisting national institutions to fulfil their mandated activities. The Forum is intended to complement and support, and not to duplicate, the activities of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR), and existing regional coordination or accreditation bodies.

## Our principles

The CFNHRI operates within the context of the following general principles, which inform its objectives:

- “Inclusiveness”: The CFNHRI is intended to be an ‘inclusive’ body of Commonwealth NHRIs and other national accountability mechanisms with a human rights mandate.
- “Complementarity and non-duplication”: The CFNHRI is based on the principle of offering complementarity and support to existing national, regional and international bodies, systems and processes and intends to carry out its activities on the principle of non-duplication.
- “Strategic”: The CFNHRI will be strategic and focused in its approach and will seek to identify its comparative advantages (in keeping with the above principle of complementarity). In terms of sharing expertise, information and best practice, the CFNHRI will facilitate and maintain a ‘two way’ mutually supportive relationship with and between the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth NHRIs, as well as member governments for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Commonwealth.

## **Our objectives**

- To be an inclusive forum for networking and sharing of experiences, information, knowledge and 'best practices' among Commonwealth NHRIs.
- To promote and facilitate strategic partnership and linkages between Commonwealth NHRIs themselves and between Commonwealth NHRIs and other regional and international bodies dealing with NHRIs.
- To support the development and promotion of compliance with the Paris Principles taking into account the ICC accreditation process, including through encouraging and supporting the process towards establishment of Paris Principles-compliant NHRIs in Commonwealth member countries.
- To coordinate and allow for collective (consensus-based) expressions of support, encouragement or concern, in relation to particular events and developments affecting Commonwealth NHRIs individually or collectively, for the better defence and promotion of human rights.
- To promote increased interaction with Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOG), principally through the CHOGM process.
- To complement and support the work of Commonwealth Secretariat in promoting and protecting human rights in the Commonwealth.

## **Delivering our objectives 2016-2019**

At the March 2016 Annual Meeting in Geneva, the CFNHRI agreed the following priorities for its strategic plan.

A number of these priorities have been successfully advanced by the CFNHRI at recent engagements, including the adoption of the Kigali and Saint Julian Declarations. Future progress for all priorities will draw from the good practice gained from these experiences, based on an active membership and facilitating Chair.

## **Proposed Priorities**

The CFNHRI has identified eight priorities of equal merit. These are:

### **Child, early and forced marriage**

In May 2015 members of the CFNHRI adopted the Kigali Declaration on Child, Early and Forced Marriage, which sets out a comprehensive framework for members to take forward and strengthen their efforts in prevention and elimination of early and forced marriage in their respective countries.



The CFNHRI will continue to promote the Kigali Declaration and seek to increase the number of members endorsements. It will use the Declaration as a platform to call for further action by the United Nations and the Commonwealth and its members. It will support the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat and encourage collaboration between Commonwealth NHRIs and other national accountability mechanisms with a human rights mandate.

### **Climate justice**

At the November 2015 biennial in Malta the CFNHRI agreed the Saint Julian Declaration on Climate Justice, calling for 'a global response to dealing with the consequences of climate change by ensuring the explicit recognition of human rights in the new Climate Agreement.'

The CFNHRI will build upon the Saint Julian Declaration through a programme of work that develops expressions of support for positive action by the United Nations, the Commonwealth and its member states, recognising the need to address climate change in order to protect human rights.

### **Freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly**

The CFNHRI recognises that freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association are fundamental rights that form the basis of the full enjoyment of other rights, and are a cornerstone of democratic societies, indispensable conditions for the full development of the person and are at the heart of an active, free and engaged civil society.

In addition the CFNHRI recognises that freedom to manifest ones' religion and belief may be enabled by the exercise of freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

The CFNHRI will strengthen the role of NHRIs in safeguarding these rights and freedoms and supporting civil society through *inter alia*: sharing experiences and good practice amongst members in developing human rights instruments and tools to advise government, through human rights education of individuals and institutions, through monitoring and research and through, where appropriate, use of legal and regulatory powers to protect and promote these rights. The CFNHRI will continue to advocate for and ensure the protection of human rights defenders and civil society in their respective countries.

## **Migration**

While for some migration is a positive and empowering experience, far too many migrants have to endure human rights violations, discrimination, and exploitation. The dangers migrants face include the perilous journeys, exploitation by criminal networks, dangerous interception practices, and the ill treatment experienced by migrants, particularly irregular migrants, in countries of destination such as discrimination and marginalisation, arbitrary decision-making, prolonged detention, difficult working and living conditions, and lack of basic social services. Migrants can often be found working in jobs that are dirty, dangerous and degrading.

The CFNHRI recognises that a human rights approach to migration puts migrants at the heart of migration policies and management, and places particular attention on the situation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups of migrants. The CFNHRI will continue to advocate for the rights of migrants at the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels and to advocate for the elaboration of a rights-based global migration governance framework.

## **Post-conflict, reconciliation and human rights**

There are a number of internationally recognised frameworks to help post conflict societies address their past and achieve a long-lasting and sustainable peace. This includes the victim-focused 'Transitional Justice' and ex-combatant-focused 'Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration', which have been developed by the United Nations.

The CFNHRI will continue to provide members working in post-conflict societies with a forum to share good practice and experiences, utilising internationally recognised frameworks and international human rights law, and working alongside member states and individuals affected by conflict. In particular, regard will be paid to the implementation of a comprehensive approach to the right to the truth, the right to a remedy (including reparations and guarantees of non-repetition), and access to justice. Attention will also be paid to addressing extra-judicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances, and ensuring that laws and policies on counter-terrorism are human rights compliant.

## **The Universal Periodic Review Process**

The Universal Periodic Review is a unique process which involves a peer review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four and a half years. It aims to improve the human rights situation in all countries, by creating a process where governments are held to

account by other countries for their human rights situation. The second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review will be completed in 2016.

The CFNHRI is committed to encouraging discussion amongst its members, and will continue to facilitate formal and informal dialogue in advance of, and during, the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review which will begin in 2017. In particular, attention will be focused on supporting small institutions through the provision of guidance, augmenting technical support available from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

### **Human rights based approaches for good governance**

The CFNHRI is committed to encouraging the adoption of human rights values in the governance practices of Commonwealth member states. The CFNHRI will support members to promote these approaches in their respective countries.

The CFNHRI will continue to build strong partnerships providing opportunities for members to exchange good practices aimed at promoting human rights compliant laws, policies and practices by the respective governments and public authorities of Commonwealth member states. This will include optimising relationships between NHRIs and other domestic authorities with a human rights mandate as a means of strengthening good governance.

### **Business and human rights**

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights consist of the state duty to protect human rights, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and access to remedy, as endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council.

The CFNHRI will provide a means for members to share good practice in implementing the Guiding Principles within member states and down supply chains across member states. Such good practice will include experiences establishing multi-stakeholder initiatives including Business and Human Rights Forums and public procurement initiatives. These will seek to complement the role of the UN OHCHR and the ICC. The CFNHRI will liaise with other Commonwealth bodies and relevant institutions to support their work with business and human rights including initiatives on Mega Sporting Events involving forum members.

