

Briefing to Member States on “Development — A human right for all: Strengthening coordinated United Nations support for national capacity-building” (co-organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG))

June 1st, 2011 – Wednesday’s meeting on strengthening UN support for national capacity building paid special attention to cultivating development in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) with a view to a human rights-based approach. The meeting was opened by Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (Co-Chair of the UNDG-HRM), as she offered a brief introduction and overview of what the meeting was to cover and how it would be organized. She stressed that the meeting comes at a symbolic moment, as it was the Human Right to Development’s 25th anniversary of its adoption into the UN. The speaker began by explaining the roles of the UN development agencies and the office of the High Commissioner and also provided a timeline of UN action on human rights in the last 20 years. She noted that the concept of the “right to development” includes the following strategies: putting people at the center of development, freedom, active and meaningful participation, non-discrimination, fair distribution of benefits and protection of natural resources, all the while keeping in mind the advancement of political, social and cultural rights of people.

Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, Permanent Representative of Nepal and part of the Global Coordination Bureau of the LDCs, set forth a vision of the right to development that stresses enhanced participation and equal distribution of benefits with a special focus on enhancing human rights. It was his contention that this global initiative not only affects LDCs, but contributes to overall global development as well. In addition, the global impact of this initiative is doubly important because development, peace, security and human rights are intertwined and interrelated variables. A major part of his discussion was focused on the challenges of LDCs in achieving success with their national human rights agendas. He points to structural limitations and resource limitations as a major reason for this. The speaker underscored the importance of outside support and assistance and deemed it necessary for human rights initiatives to be successful in LDCs; there needs to be a viable partnership between the UN and local

governments. Factors such as the disproportionate impact of climate change, the global financial crisis, the rise in food prices and the cost of energy have all affected development in LDCs. Bringing a structural transformation to LDCs is a priority in helping them achieve their human rights goals. Accordingly, there's a firm commitment from the international community to provide financial and technical support to LDCs to help with ongoing development and human rights initiatives. He also discussed the importance of the recent conference in Istanbul on LDCs, going over its main recommendations, its importance for the UN and international community and what needs to be done in moving forward. His final remarks went into detail about the program of action from the 4th UN conference in Istanbul on LDCs.

The next portion of the presentation was given through a live video-conference feed streamed from Ecuador. Mr. Adrian Lopez, Director of Public Policy at the National Secretariat for Planning and Development, was on hand to discuss the human rights and development initiatives in Ecuador and how they have gone about this in a rather unique way. Ecuador has instituted the right to development in their new constitutional framework, which is a groundbreaking way to implement this nationally. Mr. Lopez talked about Ecuador's new constitution, which focuses on multiculturalism and ethnic accommodation as well as promoting human rights and justice. Interestingly, they have defined development as "good-living," which essentially alludes to increasing the standard of living for all Ecuadorian people. New public policies contained within the constitution are specifically geared toward the enablement and empowerment of the people. Ecuador's new national-development plan is mandatory for the public sector and everything (government agencies, society, and economy) must adapt to it, according to Mr. Lopez. The local ministries must be responsible to implement these changes in their local municipalities and monitoring will be a major priority for officials in Quito. There is a major focus within Ecuadorian policy on equal development of ethnic groups, especially indigenous groups, which is crucial considering the ethnic diversity of Ecuador's population. Within these new policies, there's a special emphasis on gender, disability and educational gaps in order to ensure a comprehensive rights-based approach to constitutional change. The speakers stressed participation, equality, inclusion, social justice, accountability and non-

discrimination as the main axioms guiding the direction of these constitutional changes and their impact on all sectors of society and government. For example, the Ecuadorian national plan of development includes a focus on disabilities and can be accessed and read in Braille. In summary, Ecuador's multipronged human rights-based approach of national development planning was touted as an exemplary model of how LDCs should formulate policy moving forward. Those on the panel hinted that this template of development policy should be utilized in other nations.

The final presentation was from the UNDP co-chair, Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, whose main point was to emphasize UNDP's key role in helping member states implement and plan their national human rights and development strategies in a coordinating manner. The speaker addressed the role of UNDP, in terms of its role in development focused on human rights and affirmed its commitment to supporting national people-centered development initiatives and their local implementation through member states. UNDP is currently focused on capacity-building for development initiatives and assisting national governments in mainstreaming human rights. Their efforts are also focused on supporting countries to design and institute policies and programs aimed at improving human rights as well as reducing discrimination and inequality. The speaker provided relevant examples of success in helping governments in the Balkans, Belize, Macedonia and the Philippines to better structure human rights programs by identifying areas of importance within these policies that need to be addressed. In Liberia, UNDP helped the government institute and implement its poverty reduction strategy nationally and focused on implementing this in a people-centered approach based on equality. Similar efforts were taken in Benin, where human rights approaches were pushed within the national poverty reduction frameworks of the country. UNDP acknowledged the need to enhance and strengthen UN capacities and capabilities in supporting national needs. The speaker noted the increased demand of technical support from member states and agreed that the UN system must improve its technical capabilities in order to meet the expectations of states which will, in turn, foster stronger national ownership of development. In conclusion, aside from strengthening its own mechanisms, UNDP has been and will continue to be a

major partner in strengthening those of member states in order to support ongoing human rights initiatives locally.

Several member states had questions and comments for the panel. Finland fully supported the recommendations from the LDC Conference in Istanbul and stated its desire to pledge \$50,000 towards ensuring that the goals of the conference were met. An EU delegate also spoke about the European Union's support for further assisting ongoing development initiatives, the importance of the right to development and the achievements of the conference in Istanbul. Sweden mentioned the upcoming conference on disability support within human rights approaches and urged the UN member states and UNDP to participate and show their support. In general, there was widespread support for the presentations and ideas of the panelists. There seemed to be a strong consensus on the direction of development initiatives, the importance of the right to development and the need to strengthen national and UN capacities for development support.