



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/10/26
14 January 2009

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Tenth session

Agenda item 2

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REPORTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

Enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 7/3. It summarizes replies received in response to a request for information sent to Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Responses were received from the Governments of Greece, Lebanon, Spain and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), as well as from the United Nations Population Fund, the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar, the Office of the Salvadorian human rights Ombudsman, and the non-governmental organization Federation of Cuban Women.

* Late submission.

Introduction

1. In its resolution 7/3, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to consult States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on ways and means to enhance international cooperation and dialogue in the United Nations human rights machinery, including the Council, as recognized by the General Assembly in the preamble of its resolution 60/251, and to present a report on his or her findings to the Council at the relevant session in 2009.
2. On 13 November 2008, the Council Secretariat addressed a note verbale to Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, seeking their views and information as requested in resolution 7/3. As at 7 January 2009, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had received responses, summarized below, from the Governments of Greece, Lebanon, Spain and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), as well as from the United Nations Population Fund, the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar, the Office of the Salvadorian human rights Ombudsman, and the non-governmental organization Federation of Cuban Women.¹

Responses from Governments

3. Greece

[Original: English]
[1 December 2008]

(a) The Government of Greece reaffirmed that active participation of States and groups of States in the Human Rights Council as well as in the treaty bodies and relevant mechanisms leads to an enabling environment for active international cooperation in the field of human rights.

(b) In the above-mentioned framework, regional cooperation between individual States and groups and between groups is a *sine qua non* condition for enhancing cooperation in this field, regardless of the groupings within the Council. Intraregional initiatives should be encouraged in the Council as much as outside its boundaries.

(c) There is ample room for efforts to increase bilateral cooperation through the linkage of development cooperation to human rights. In this respect, Greece has funded programmes of international development cooperation in the field of human rights through official development assistance, allocating a total of 1,079,632.17 euros for the biennium 2006-2007.

¹ The full texts of the submissions are available from the Secretariat.

4. Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[23 December 2008]

(a) The Government of Lebanon expressed its commitment to opposing arbitrary detention and physical or mental torture of arrested people. It highlighted the importance of the possibility of having access to adequate medical care in prison and of respecting the rights of migrants and foreigners in Lebanon. Lebanon pledged to facilitate the protection of the rights of migrants and foreigners and to fight against human trafficking, especially of women and children.

(b) The Government of Lebanon will continue its cooperation with international organizations on human rights and humanitarian law to protect and strengthen the implementation of human rights. It will also give training to its human rights personnel for these purposes.

5. Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[16 December 2008]

(a) The Government of Spain reaffirmed that human rights are a key factor in the State's policy of international cooperation and that, in its present master plan for 2005-2008, human rights is the cross-cutting axis defining the model of cooperation. Its reference point is the international framework of human rights, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international covenants, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe and the provisions of domestic legislation.

(b) The Government highlighted various mechanisms established in the master plan, including dialogue and political negotiation with partner countries, inclusion in strategic planning by incorporating the context of partner countries and the evaluation of the potential impact of cooperation in human rights in each of the partner countries, and a rights-based approach to sector strategies in such areas as governability, indigenous peoples, peace and conflict resolution, health, gender, humanitarian action and the fight against hunger.

(c) The Government also provided information on the strengthening of the multilateral system of promotion and protection of human rights. The Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development elaborates numerous programmes directly linked to its approach to promotion and protection of human rights, to a total of 10,512,140 euros for 2008, in the fight against female genital mutilation and gender violence; the fight against human trafficking; access to justice and strengthening of judicial systems; support for peace processes and assistance to victims of armed conflicts; the right to food; the promotion of the rights of indigenous people and people of African descent; and fundamental labour principles and rights. These programmes are mainly carried out in coordination with United Nations agencies and programmes as well as

with regional mechanisms. The Agency supports programmes and projects of civil society on the promotion of human rights, such as research programmes with Spanish non-governmental organizations and with the International Federation for Human Rights and other relevant international networks and platforms.

(d) In addition to the Agency for International Cooperation, the Government of Spain has contributed to various bilateral and voluntary funds related to human rights, such as OHCHR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Council of Europe, the international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines, the Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Spain also participates in the framework of the European Union and the different European initiatives of promotion of democracy and human rights, in particular the programme established through regulation 1889/2006. For the period 2009-2012, the Government of Spain intends to concentrate its efforts on the promotion of democratic governance and human rights, with special reference to the situation of weak States through an adequate multilateral approach.

(e) The Government of Spain also supports the efforts developed by the United Nations Development Group for the inclusion of a human rights approach to the development assistance system of the United Nations according to what was developed in the network of the Development Group's human rights policies, in the general framework of the reform of the United Nations cooperation system ("Delivering as One"). This support has been given to different "One UN" projects through the Spain-United Nations Development Programme fund to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Lastly, the Government will continue to strengthen agencies and human rights specialized organizations, universal as well as regional, and in particular OHCHR, to which Spain has allocated a total of 8,320,000 euros in contributions through the Development Aid Fund.

6. **Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)**

[Original: Spanish]
[17 December 2008]

(a) The Government of Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) stressed that the obligation of the United Nations to promote international cooperation in the field of human rights cannot be separated from the obligation of States to cooperate with each other. This obligation is clearly established in international law, the Charter of the United Nations (Art. 1, para. 3), the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, as contained in General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, and the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

(b) Cooperation among States should be based on the understanding of differences between States and the diversity of political, economic, social, cultural and religious systems. International cooperation should also be based on solidarity so that costs and obligations are

distributed fairly, namely, in conformity with the principles of equity and social justice. In this respect, the Government reiterated the full validity of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the universal values accepted as the foundation of international relations of the twenty-first century, as contained in paragraph 6 of the Declaration.

(c) The Government noted with concern that various countries, acting individually or in the framework of collective actions, continue to hinder the debate on the relationship between human rights and international solidarity and on the obligation to cooperate. Moreover, it is even more problematic, based on the principle of the primary responsibility of States, that these countries deny the right of peoples to peace and the need to promote justice and equity in the international arena, which is the necessary means to comply with the duty to promote and protect human rights. Such positions do not observe international law and ignore the spirit of resolution 7/3 of the Human Rights Council, in particular paragraph 2.

(d) The State reiterated its unconditional support for activities that promote a constructive debate and aim to enhance genuine international cooperation in the field of human rights. In this context, it welcomed the workshops promoted by OHCHR, as requested by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 8/9, and urged the special procedures of the Council to collaborate with each other in order to promote international cooperation in the field of human rights. It also stressed that the universal periodic review mechanism, which is still being consolidated, should be used to raise specific needs in the field of cooperation, based on State consent.

(e) The Government urged States to refrain from adopting measures that could have a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights in other countries or regions. In this regard, it highlighted the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food (A/63/278), in which he stated that “States have ‘international’ obligations, reaching beyond the national territory, in addition to the obligations each State has to its own population. Indeed, under general public international law, States may not disregard the impact of activities under their jurisdiction on other States’ territories.” Lastly, the Government expressed its wish to share with other countries successful experiences in the field of international cooperation.

Responses from intergovernmental organizations

7. United Nations Population Fund

[Original: English]
[11 December 2008]

(a) Working in collaboration with international, regional and national stakeholders to promote and protect women’s rights and reproductive rights is a priority for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The promotion and protection of human rights is fundamental to its work, in line with the programme of action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, which guides the work of the Fund in its three focus areas: population and development; reproductive health and gender equality; and the empowerment of women and other international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

(b) The Fund collaborates actively with various actors, including other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, international and regional organizations, human rights treaty bodies and special procedures, Governments, parliamentarians, civil society and community-based organizations, religious leaders and other decision makers to support efforts aimed at protecting the rights of women and adolescent girls worldwide, including the right to reproductive health. In particular, in 2007, UNFPA partnered with the Special Rapporteur on the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health to organize an expert meeting that brought together United Nations treaty body representatives, special procedures and specialized agencies, together with non-governmental organizations and international experts, to discuss experiences of working on reproductive rights and future strategies for mainstreaming reproductive health issues into their work further and for collaboration.

(c) The Fund listed various United Nations treaty bodies (the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child) and special procedures (the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences) working in the area of reproductive rights, and stated that it is important that the various mechanisms inform and contribute to each other's work, cross-fertilizing their recommendations, and using their own mandates to bring coherence to their jurisprudence and advance the international human rights protection system.

(d) The Fund suggested that United Nations agencies, special procedures and non-governmental organizations should use the general recommendations and concluding comments and observations from the treaty bodies and special procedures as well as the recommendations from the universal periodic review in their work to promote and protect reproductive rights. However, for this purpose there is a need for the work of the human rights system, including its jurisprudence, to be communicated more widely, in particular to the United Nations system in the field. For example, United Nations country teams and the Resident Coordinator system should develop systematic procedures to support this dissemination of information as well as the implementation efforts by Governments and civil society.

(e) Non-governmental organizations have been instrumental in bringing reproductive rights to the attention of treaty bodies. At the international, regional and national levels, these organizations are key partners in the effort to promote and protect reproductive rights, such as in their work to promote reproductive health rights through various strategies, including working with treaty bodies and regional bodies by submitting amicus briefs, engaging with special procedures, advocating for Government compliance with treaty body recommendations, working with national partners on equality and reproductive health issues, including providing training and capacity-building for lawyers and campaigners, and providing research, analysis and tools for human rights education. However, UNFPA also noted that challenges to effective collaboration still remain for non-governmental organizations, including resource constraints that often make it difficult for them, particularly those from the South, to be present at the sessions of the Human Rights Council and its committees and to present oral reports.

Responses from national human rights institutions

8. National Human Rights Committee of Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
[4 December 2008]

(a) The National Human Rights Committee of Qatar stated that it is implementing the resolution in accordance with its mandate, in accordance with the law of its establishment. In fulfilling its mandate, it is organizing many local and regional meetings and conferences to enhance and speed ratification of the remaining main human rights treaties. It had responded positively to all invitations at the global and regional levels to attend human rights events and, that in this respect, it is encouraging the State to accede to and ratify human rights conventions and fully comply with its obligations under those treaties.

(b) The Committee provides advice to different State institutions, the Government in particular, participates in preparing all reports submitted to the different treaty monitoring bodies and committees, and cooperates with all United Nations human rights mechanisms, including by receiving missions and special procedures mandate-holders. It also provided information on its cooperation with non-governmental organizations, in particular with Amnesty International, to discuss better cooperation in the field of promoting and protecting human rights, and with the Saudi Arabia National Human Rights Committee, to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation.

(c) The Committee has discussed the issue of migrant workers with the anti-slavery regional representative, and human rights issues and means of cooperation with diplomats and delegations of different countries, such as with French human rights institutions on the means and programmes for raising human rights awareness and how to improve human rights at the local level.

(d) In terms of cooperation at the regional and international levels, the Committee participated in the first expert meeting of the Arab League human rights meeting and the first meeting of the Euro-Arab meeting on human rights. It has organized different activities with other Arab human rights institutions on elections, the role of national human rights institutions and other training activities. It also attended the session of the Human Rights Council in September 2008 and contributed to the conference held in Egypt on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

9. Office of the Salvadorian human rights Ombudsman

[Original: Spanish]
[18 December 2008]

(a) The Office of the Salvadorian human rights Ombudsman stated that, of the different initiatives conducted, the most relevant were the treaties signed with different bodies and international organizations for the promotion of human rights since March 2008, and its participation in the meetings of the Central America Council of Human Rights Attorneys with the aim of consolidating human rights protection mechanisms in Central America. It has cooperated with the human rights protection bodies of the United Nations, such as the treaty

bodies, and attended the meetings of the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsmen and the Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Americas.

(b) The Office provided information on its cooperation agreements with international bodies and organizations, including its cooperation with the National Commission of Human Rights of Mexico and UNFPA, its participation in the creation of the regional committee against human trafficking, and its cooperation with geologists in the field of human rights in relation to the environment, Inwent-Capacity Building International of Germany on historical memory, UNICEF, the Inter-American Institution for Human Rights and the Embassy of Italy in El Salvador.

(c) The Office participated in meetings of the Central America Council of Lawyers for Human Rights to discuss relevant issues on the protection of human rights, and in particular on resolutions addressing such topics as climate change, the human rights of women, the Rome Statute, regional and national electoral monitoring, food and nutrition security in Central America, efforts to abolish corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading punishment for children and adolescents, the directive of the European Parliament and the Council in relation to the proceedings and common rules in the Member States for the return of nationals of third countries illegally residing on their territory, and the Ibero-American Convention on Youth Rights.

(d) The Office presents reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on Migrant Workers and participates in the meetings of the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsmen and the Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Americas.

Responses from non-governmental organizations

10. Federation of Cuban Women

[Original: English and Spanish]
[12 December 2008]

(a) The Federation of Cuban Women introduced its nature, work and views on international cooperation. The international cooperation the world needs should be based on the respect for the principles of sovereignty, self-determination and dignity of peoples; cooperation should be disinterested and unconditional, and have as its principle the achievement of the enjoyment of all human rights of all the world's inhabitants.

(b) Concerning human rights in the framework of the United Nations, the collective responsibility of the States to defend the principle of dignity, equality and human justice at the global level should not only be recognized but also monitored and evaluated through States and United Nations human rights mechanisms, which should not defend the interests of superpowers only. States which, even attached to the Charter of the United Nations, do not assume this responsibility or that justify its non-fulfilment should be denounced and condemned.

(c) The Federation expressed its concern that the international community cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals if due attention is not paid to economic, social and cultural rights, and particularly to the right to development.

(d) To achieve a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity, it is necessary to eradicate the discriminatory practices that some Governments of the North impose on others, based on grounds such as gender, religion, culture, race, political opinion or juridical and philosophical concepts. The conditions to attain a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity also include the requirement that the international community not allow such Governments to impose their points of view and patterns on developing countries and that the international community respect the differences and particularities of each nation. Such is the road allowing for the building of a new international order, which denounces and rejects discrimination based on gender.

(e) The Federation reminded all States of their duty to respect and fulfil their obligations assumed by means of international instruments, including those related to human rights to which they are parties. It especially called for the fulfilment of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, one of the most universal treaties on human rights that has not been signed or ratified by all States.

(f) The Federation regretted that the human rights of thousands of millions of inhabitants are daily violated, especially those of women, who are victims of various forms of violence, economically or as the result of conflicts and wars. Cuban women will continue their struggle to denounce the cruel economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed by the Government of the United States, which constitutes a major form of violence, affecting them negatively for nearly half a century, although it has been rejected every year by the majority of the international community at the General Assembly.

(g) The Federation pledged to plead and struggle, together with women's movements, to achieve a more inclusive United Nations truly committed to the protection, promotion and full enjoyment of all human rights based on objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity and guided strictly by the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and where multilateralism will prevail. It also pledged to accompany women throughout the world in their struggle to reach peace and a fairer, more equal and democratic economic order, in which the human rights of all women and men, girls and boys of the world are respected, and in such a pursuit they will continue dialogue and cooperation.
