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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Report of the Secretary-General on measures taken to implement resolution 9/8 and obstacles to its implementation, including recommendations for further improving the effectiveness of, harmonizing, and reforming the treaty body system*

1. In its resolution 9/8 entitled “Effective implementation of international human rights instruments”, the Human Rights Council requested the Secretary-General to report annually on measures taken to implement that resolution and on obstacles to its implementation, including recommendations for further improving the effectiveness of, harmonizing, and reforming the treaty body system. This report briefly highlights the most recent developments in this regard.
2. Information regarding the twenty-first meeting of the chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, held in Geneva on 2 and 3 July 2009, has been submitted to the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 57/202. This report (A/64/276) also includes information on the outcomes of the eighth and ninth Inter-Committee Meetings.
3. During 2009, human rights treaty bodies held 20 sessions amounting to 64 weeks in Geneva and New York (each session lasting between one and four weeks), during which 103 State party reports were reviewed in plenary sessions and an equivalent number in working groups, where such groups exist. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held one of its sessions in two chambers and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination extended one of its sessions by one week to address the backlog of reports awaiting review. Treaty bodies received during 2009 a total of 150 State party reports. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held its first two sessions in 2009 and commenced work on its rules of procedures and working methods.

* Late submission

4. The treaty bodies continued their work to finalize treaty-specific reporting guidelines to complement the guidelines for the common core document. In 2009, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted its treaty-specific reporting guidelines and the Human Rights Committee started its work in this regard. Treaty bodies continued to develop, improve and implement such new working methods as establishing the list of issues prior to reporting and refining the follow-up procedures to concluding observations and views on petitions. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted new general comments. Treaty bodies and the Secretariat continued efforts to harmonize and standardize their work, including through the three-day ninth and tenth Inter-Committee Meetings of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies and the two-day twenty-first meeting of the chairpersons.

5. Treaty bodies and the Secretariat examined some 9,000 items of correspondence and over 110 new individual complaints received by the treaty bodies were registered. The Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women examined and adopted final decisions on some 100 communications. They issued over 30 requests for interim measures of protection in cases where lack of such protection might lead to irreparable harm for the petitioners. They also followed up on over 50 decisions in which violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture or the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had been found. In 2009, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment undertook three country visits to Cambodia, Honduras and Paraguay.

6. Four meetings of States parties took place in Geneva or New York during 2009, essentially to hold elections to fill seats for which mandates had terminated (the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families). In the case of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the membership expanded to 14 members following the entry into force of the Convention for the forty-first State party in July 2009 and its meeting of States parties thus also elected experts to fill the new seats. During 2009, human rights treaty bodies also had six informal meetings with States parties which were widely attended and provided an opportunity for States parties and treaty bodies to discuss the most recent developments in the work of treaty bodies, as well as other matters of common interest, in particular the efforts of treaty bodies to improve their working methods (the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families). An open-ended working group of the Human Rights Council on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide a communications procedure met from 14 to 18 December 2009.¹

7. OHCHR updated the training tool (DVD) on the work of the treaty bodies, entitled “Bringing human rights home”, which will also be made available in all United Nations official languages. The Office also conducted training workshops on treaty body reporting and follow-up in Burundi, Djibouti, the Maldives, Niger, Serbia and the Seychelles, as well

¹ The report of the working group was submitted to the thirteenth session of the Human Rights Council, to be held in March 2010 (A/HRC/13/43).

as regional workshops in Mali (in cooperation with the International Organization of the Francophonie for 13 French-speaking West African countries) and Thailand (for the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand). A regional judicial colloquium was also organized in Thailand (for Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand).

8. On 14 September 2009, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, in her statement to the Human Rights Council, *inter alia*, underscored the importance of the treaty bodies, both through their reporting and individual complaints mechanisms, as well as through the universal periodic review process. She highlighted that the overall success of the human rights protection system, marked by the increase in the number of human rights instruments and corresponding monitoring bodies, together with greater compliance by States parties with reporting obligations, posed greater demands on the treaty bodies and her Office. She stated that, while that success was most welcome and encouraging, States parties should accede to human rights treaties and other stakeholders to initiate a process of reflection on how to streamline and strengthen the treaty body system to achieve better coordination among these mechanisms and in their interaction with special procedures and the universal periodic review. The High Commissioner made a similar appeal before the General Assembly on 21 October 2009.

9. OHCHR organized with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in cooperation with other partners, the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. For the anniversary, 700 delegates, including high-level dignitaries, children and young people (more than 60 States and 130 non-governmental organizations and academic institutions were represented) deliberated on three themes “Dignity, Development and Dialogue” in six workshops from 8 to 9 October 2009 and came up with recommendations, which were adopted by the Committee at its fifty-third session in January 2010. Furthermore, OHCHR organized a series of events with United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations regional commissions at national and regional level (Bangkok, Banjul, Buenos Aires, Geneva and Istanbul) to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the context of the 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. These celebrations culminated in a global event held on 3 December 2009 at United Nations Headquarters in New York attended by the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The event brought together speakers from around the world who shared examples of how the Convention has been used to implement women’s human rights and achieve gender equality in their countries, including through the application of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2009. Furthermore, OHCHR also organized a three-day expert workshop for members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 28 to 30 October 2009 in order to support the Committee’s future work under the new Optional Protocol of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The expert seminar entitled “Implementation of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: future role of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights” brought together various experts from several countries, including Argentina, Colombia, India and South Africa, that have sustained experience in adjudicating individual complaints in domestic courts in the field of economic, social and cultural rights.

10. From 29 November to 2 December 2010, the tenth Inter-Committee Meeting of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies was held in Geneva. Three representatives of each treaty body were invited. The Inter-Committee Meeting had on its agenda two particular issues: follow-up to concluding observations and decisions and the universal periodic review. The meeting mostly looked at how treaty bodies could strengthen, harmonize and develop their follow-up procedures under the reporting process, as well as under the individual communications process. Currently, four committees have formally established follow-up procedures: the

Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture, and more recently the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The meeting also discussed ways to enhance inquiries and visits under existing procedures established by some of the core international human rights treaties. As starting point for their discussions, the meeting's participants were provided with two background papers by the Secretariat: an overview of follow-up procedures under the reporting procedure (HRI/ICM/2009/6) and one on follow-up procedures under the individual communications procedure (HRI/ICM/2009/7). The full report of the meeting will be submitted along with the forthcoming report of the eleventh Inter-Committee Meeting to the twenty-second meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, that will convene in Geneva from 28 June to 2 July 2010 (pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178). It will contain points of agreement as suggested by the tenth Inter-Committee Meeting.
