



High-level conference on the role of National Human Rights Institutions in Preventing Torture in Africa

Outcome declaration “A continent united against torture”

We, the members of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), participants of the high-level conference on the role of National Human Rights Institutions in Preventing Torture in Africa that took place in Rabat, Morocco, from 7 – 8 September, 2011,

Recalling that acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are absolutely prohibited in national constitutions, regional and international human rights law and can never be justified, and that this should be reflected in national legislation;

Considering the obligations of States to prohibit and prevent these acts from happening;

Deeply concerned about the persistence of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

Equally concerned about the overuse and length of pre-trial detention and the overcrowding and deplorable conditions in many places of detention amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment;

Considering the important role of National Human Rights Institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights in compliance with the Paris Principles;

Decide to further enhance the role of National Human Rights Institutions as leaders in the prevention of torture through their Network of African National Human Rights Institutions;

Commit to fully and actively support the implementation of the 3 year project entitled “a continent united against torture: Promotion of the role of NHRIs in the prevention of torture”¹;

Decide to prioritise in the framework of this project the topics identified by the African NHRIs;

Commit to offer each other mutual support in order to further develop and implement the following issues as discussed in the conference:

- Assist each other through joint action on strategic cases or issues, including on obtaining public buy-in for reducing the overuse and length of pre-trial detention, the overcrowding and deplorable conditions of detention;

¹ As outlined in the « *Convention de partenariat entre le réseau des institutions nationales africaines des droits de l'homme et l'association pour la prévention de la torture 2011 – 2013* », signed on the 5th of November 2011.

- Facilitate the creation of inclusive national platforms against torture with a view to making the idea of torture unacceptable in our societies, and organise public events to commemorate the international day against torture on the 26 of June, thereby promoting further a human rights culture;
- Advocate for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and promote a transparent and inclusive decision making process leading to the designation of effective and OPCAT-compliant National Preventive Mechanisms (NPM);
- NHRIs should take the initiative for initiating an inclusive consultation process with government, civil society and other relevant stakeholders on the establishment of NPMs;
- In cases where the NHRI emerges as the best choice as future NPM, underline the necessity for NHRIs to conduct in depth self-assessments of their capacity to become an NPM and, if needed, advocate for the adaptations/changes/reforms necessary to ensure that they will be able to effectively discharge the NPM mandate;
- Provide training and continuous support to NHRI members and staff so that they can best fulfil the difficult task of preventing torture and attending to torture survivors' needs and defending their rights;
- Initiate the development of national action plans against torture and regularly audit them, and create national think tanks or working groups with stakeholders from the judiciary, parliament, the executive and the civil society, to lead the process and develop a comprehensive strategy on preventive issues including, among others:
 - Interaction with relevant regional and international human rights mechanisms;
 - Domesticate the UN Convention against Torture through appropriate legislation which includes criminalising torture;
 - investigation of allegations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment and ensure prompt prosecution of alleged perpetrators;
 - Training of law enforcement officials and other relevant actors;
 - Monitoring places of detention;
 - Responding to the needs of victims, and take the initiative to ensure that necessary services are made available by the State for victims support and rehabilitation
 - Take all steps to ensure that victims receive adequate redress;
 - Exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices on the above mentioned topics among NHRIs and encourage exchange of experience among other stakeholders, in particular parliamentary committees.