

## **BACKGROUND PAPER**

### **THIRD MEETING OF THE ASIA PACIFIC FORUM OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS**

**7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 1998, JAKARTA**

**ITEM: ISSUES MANDATED BY THE SECOND REGIONAL WORKSHOP  
FORUM WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

#### **BACKGROUND**

In the Concluding Statement of the Second Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of National Human Rights Institutions held in New Delhi, India in September 1997, Forum members gave special emphasis to the wide dissemination of information about human rights and the role of national institutions. Forum members requested the Secretariat of the Forum develop, by the end of 1998, a web site focusing on the work of the Forum and regional national human rights institutions.

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this paper is to inform Forum members of the Forum web site. It is proposed that the Forum Secretariat continue to consolidate and broaden its web site activities in the areas of internet expansion, research and quality links to other human rights web sites.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Forum members continue to provide information to the Secretariat to be incorporated into the web site.
2. Forum members approve the Secretariat developing web site projects for those national institutions wishing to establish a web site facility.
3. Forum members request that the Secretariat seek donor funding for these projects.

# **ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

## **BACKGROUND**

Since its establishment, the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (the Forum) has emphasised the importance of promoting the work of national human rights commissions. The use of media in all its formats is an important tool to disseminate information on a large scale about the role of independent human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights at a national level. All sectors of society including governments, non-government organisations, educational institutions and the public should have access to current information if the level of understanding of the work of independent human rights institutions and the Forum is to be fostered. In this age of information technology one of the most effective methods of distribution of information is through the world wide web.

At the First Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of National Human Rights Institutions held in Darwin, Australia in July 1996, the founding members agreed to develop and expand their mutual support, co-operation and joint activity through information exchanges.

This agreement was further developed at the Second Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of National Human Rights Institutions held in New Delhi, India in September 1997. In the Concluding Statement, members gave special emphasis to the wide dissemination of information about human rights and the role of national institutions. Members requested the Secretariat of the Forum to develop, by the end of 1998, a web site focusing on the work of the Forum and regional national human rights institutions.

This web site has now been developed and is operational ([www.apf.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.apf.hreoc.gov.au)). The primary objectives of the web site are to provide universal, accessible, educative and high quality information to

- improve awareness among governments, non-government organisations, educational institutions, students, democratic and legal institutions, research bodies and the general community about the role and work of national human rights institutions
- improve public awareness of the co-operative activities undertaken by the Forum particularly for those governments wishing to establish independent human rights institutions
- develop comprehensive profiles on each of the member institutions.

In addition, the website is part of the initiatives undertaken by the Forum to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and to mark the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.

## **PROPOSAL**

It is proposed that the Forum Secretariat continue to consolidate and broaden its web site activities in the areas of internet expansion, research and quality links to other human rights web sites.

#### Internet expansion

Along with the Forum web site, the national human rights commissions of Indonesia, New Zealand and Australia have established independent web sites. The Forum web site has links to these commissions. The Indian Commission is currently developing its site. One of the primary objectives over the next two years will be for the Secretariat to provide assistance to those regional national human rights institutions that do not have a web site but wish to disseminate information about their activities through the internet. This can be achieved in several ways.

An interim measure would be for the Forum to host all available information about these institutions on its site. The long-term strategy is to develop projects in close co-operation with institutions to assist them to develop their capacity to host and manage a web site. The Forum would need to seek donor funds to undertake these projects.

#### Research and Links

This site has the capacity to develop as the definitive research site on regional human rights initiatives. More specifically it can house information on issues such as regional national human rights commissions, regional human rights jurisprudence, the progress of regional human rights mechanism initiatives undertaken by the United Nations and the working group for the establishment of an ASEAN human rights mechanism, regional non-government activities and the work of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions.

Developing a high quality network of links to all relevant UN bodies, regional/international non-government organisations, governments and university/research centres will increase the depth and breadth of the web site.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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2. Forum members approve the Secretariat developing web site projects for those national institutions wishing to establish a web site facility.
3. Forum members request that the Secretariat seek donor funding for these projects.