

FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM OF NATIONAL HUMAN  
RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS  
ROTORUA, NEW ZEALAND, 7-9 August 2000

CLOSED SESSION REPORT

**BACKGROUND**

At the Third Annual Meeting of the Forum held in Jakarta in September 1998, Forum members requested that at the Fourth Annual Meeting they meet to discuss specific and general business issues at a one day closed session. This approach was endorsed by Forum members at the Fourth Annual Meeting held in Manila in September 1999 and the same approach has been taken for the Fifth Annual Meeting.

The following issues have been suggested by Forum members for the agenda for the closed session.

**DRAFT AGENDA**

1. Report of Forum Activities (Secretariat)
2. Admission of New Members (Secretariat)
3. Forum Structure (Working Group)
4. Report of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Workshop on National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (Justice Aurora Navarette-Recina)
5. Report on the April 2000 Meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions (ICC) and the election of four regional representatives to the ICC and one regional representative to the ICC accreditation sub-committee (Justice JS Verma)
6. Staff exchanges
7. Sixth Meeting of the Forum (Secretariat)
8. Discussion of the Fifth Annual Meeting Concluding Statement (Secretariat)
9. General business

Forum members may wish to add to the above list on the day of the meeting.

This Secretariat paper addresses some of the above issues. In addition, there exists separate papers on a report of the Forum's activities, the Nepal Human Rights Commission's application for membership and the Working Group's report on the Forum structure.

**REPORT OF FORUM ACTIVITIES**

See separate report.

**ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS**

See separate report.

**FORUM STRUCTURE**

See separate report

## **REPORT OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Verbal report by Justice Aurora Navarette-Recina.

### **REPORT ON THE APRIL 2000 MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (ICC) AND THE ELECTION OF FOUR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE ICC AND ONE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ICC ACCREDITATION SUB-COMMITTEE**

Verbal report by Justice JS Verma.

Note that in accordance with the rules of procedure of the ICC, Forum members are required to elect four regional representatives to the ICC. From these four representatives Forum members are required to elect one representative to the ICC accreditation sub-committee.

### **STAFF EXCHANGES**

Since its inception, the Asia Pacific Forum has emphasized the importance of information exchanges, training and development of staff, undertaking joint projects and sharing expertise. An element of this has been a recognition of the desirability of staff exchanges. At its Annual Meeting in Manila in September 1999, the Forum

.. agreed to a proposal that staff exchanges be promoted and arranged within the framework of a Letter of Intent between the Forum, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Volunteers Programme.

With the aim of implementing this intention, the Forum Secretariat, the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have held useful discussions about the content of a possible program and the responsibilities of the three partners.

This paper outlines the direction in which these discussions are moving and asks Forum members to give consideration to steps to implement the proposed staff exchange program.

As presently conceived, the proposed program would have four component activities:

1. The placement within individual Forum members of either national or international specialists who would implement specific projects appropriate to the circumstances of the Commission concerned. It is envisaged that each project under this activity would employ one or two specialists, who could be supported by appropriate national support staff provided as part of the project. The duration of a project under this activity could be from one to three years;
2. The exchange of staff between Forum members at a regional level. It is envisaged that each exchange would be for a period of one year. This activity differs from '1' in that Activity 2 envisages that exchange staff would carry out tasks that are part of the regular program of the Commission concerned, whereas Activity 1 would involve the development and implementation of specific time-limited projects on which the international specialists would be employed;
3. The placement of Forum member staff in the Forum Secretariat. The assignment would be for a period of one year;
4. The exchange of staff, at an inter-regional level, between Forum members, the Secretariat and national institutions of other regions of the world.

Forum members, in cooperation with UNV, the OHCHR and the Secretariat, would have a key role in managing the proposed program and would have responsibility for:

- Participating in design of projects under Activity 1;
- Participating in the selection of personnel to work in their Commission;
- Identifying appropriate task areas for exchange personnel under Activities 3 and 4; and
- Day-to-day supervision of exchange personnel working in their Commission.

There would of course be an initial phase of establishing the exchange program, including evaluating its strengths and weaknesses and making adjustments to improve its effectiveness. To assist in the smooth introduction of the program, it is proposed that its initial activities should be on a modest and manageable scale. Accordingly, in the first year it is proposed that there would be a maximum of two projects under Activity 1, one regional staff exchange for each Forum member (i.e. one staff member from each Commission sent and received) and two internships in the Secretariat. Activity 4 would be delayed until successful experience has been acquired in implementation of the other three activities.

Depending on evaluation of its effectiveness, it may be possible to expand the program in later years, both in size and scope.

The exchange program is still in the process of development. The Secretariat's consultations with UNV and OHCHR are continuing, with a view to finalising the program soon. As part of this process of project development, it would be helpful if Forum members could give consideration as to how they might wish to participate in the program. Specifically, interested Forum members should advise the Secretariat as to the following:

- Identification of project ideas that could be addressed under Activity 1. It should be noted that funding for these projects would consist essentially of the provision of specialist staff, together with their support. Projects in this program could not, therefore, incorporate elements requiring significant expenditure beyond the provision of staff. At this stage, it would not be necessary for a project proposal under this activity to be highly developed. Details could be worked out progressively in consultation with the Secretariat and other program partners;
- Identification of areas of a host institution's activity in which exchange staff from another Forum member could be employed;

The Forum Secretariat, UNV and OHCHR believe that the proposed program could bring significant benefits to Forum members and would serve to strengthen institutional capacity to promote and protect human rights in the Asia Pacific Region. In particular, the program would promote the transfer of skills and knowledge to Forum member staff, would broaden the perspectives of Forum members, would enable implementation of specific projects that could not otherwise be pursued and would expand the resources available to the Forum Secretariat.

## **SIXTH MEETING OF THE FORUM**

At the Fourth Annual Meeting the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission kindly agreed to host the Sixth Meeting of the Forum. Given that the new Chairperson of the Sri Lankan Commission will be present at APF5 and it would be advisable to reconfirm this offer.

At the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Forum the desirability of making our Meetings bi-annual and increasing the number of workshops over a two-year period to three was raised. The Secretariat would propose that Forum members discuss this issue.

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

The Secretariat is responsible for the preparation of a draft statement for the consideration of Forum members.

The Secretariat will prepare a draft concluding statement and distribute it to all Forum members on Tuesday evening. Given that the Annual Meeting will, at that stage, only be at the half-way mark, the draft statement will of necessity be an incomplete document.

It will be important for all Forum members to provide the Secretariat with any comments they may have on the draft concluding statement at the start of business on Wednesday morning. These comments will then be incorporated into the draft and important additional decisions made by the Forum during the course of business on Wednesday. A second draft will then be distributed to all Forum members for their consideration and adoption at 4:00pm on Wednesday. Please note that the agenda of the meeting has allowed Forum members one and a half hours to conclude discussion and adopt a final statement for the meeting. This statement will then be distributed to all participants.