

SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING



Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions

"A Partnership For Human Rights In Our Region"

REPORT ON APF ACTIVITIES

(July 2000 to September 2001)

**24th – 27th September 2001
Colombo, Sri Lanka**

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1. BACKGROUND

The following report contains a summary of the Forum Secretariat's operations and developments during the period July 2000 to September 2001.

The report also outlines future Forum activities of a significant nature that are anticipated to occur during the next three year period.

The work of the Forum can be categorised under three broad areas:

- (i) Strengthening the capacity of individual Forum members to enable them to more effectively undertake their national mandates.
- (ii) Assisting governments to establish their own national institutions in compliance with the minimum criteria contained in the Paris Principles.
- (iii) Promoting regional cooperation on human rights issues.

During 2000-2001 the Secretariat's operations focused on five main areas of activity:

- (i) regional cooperation and networking through Forum annual meetings and workshops,
- (ii) the development and delivery of technical assistance and cooperation projects,
- (iii) information dissemination,
- (iv) administrative support for the Forum and its activities, and
- (v) transforming the legal and managerial structure of the Forum to become an independent entity.

2. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Regional cooperation and networking is a core element of the Forum Secretariat's work. It primarily undertakes this through its annual meetings and workshops.

2.1 FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

In August 2000 the Forum held its Fifth Annual Meeting in New Zealand. The meeting was organised by the Forum Secretariat in collaboration with the host institution, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission. It was co-sponsored by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and financially supported by OHCHR, the New Zealand Government, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Australian Government, through AusAID. The meeting was attended by over 130 delegates representing all Forum members, 20 regional governments and non-governmental organizations from 24 countries. The main decisions of the meeting included:

- The admission of the Human Rights Commission of Nepal as the 8th member of the Forum
- 'In principle' approval for the transition of the Forum to an independent organisation with a new legal and managerial structure
- Agreement on Secretariat recommendations on a range of issues including the World Conference on Racism, the implementation of economic, social and

cultural rights, child soldiers, guidelines on internally displaced people, the promotion of women's rights, regional responses to crises affecting the work of national institutions and the appointment of the region's representatives on the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions.

In addition to the above, the inaugural meeting of the Forum's Advisory Council of Jurists was held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting. The Council considered two issues – the death penalty and child pornography and the Internet – and provided Forum members with their conclusions on both issues.

A full report of the Fifth Annual Meeting is available on the Forum's website.

2.2 REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER MECHANISMS IN PROMOTING AND PROTECTING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

This workshop was held in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China from 11 to 13 July 2001. The workshop was organised by the Secretariat in collaboration with the host institution, the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission. The workshop was co-sponsored and financed by the OHCHR and AusAID.

Apart from workshop facilitators and observers, the workshop comprised approximately 95 participants including:

- one participant from each of the eight Forum member institutions,
- other relevant institutions including the National Human Rights Commissions of Malaysia, Mongolia and Thailand,
- the host institution, the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission,
- two representatives from the OHCHR, including Mr Brian Burdekin, Special Adviser to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,
- national and regional NGO representatives from the Asia Pacific region,
- international guest speakers, including Professor Virginia Dan Dan, Chair of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Mr Vasu Pillai, Member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Professor Arjun Sengupta, Independent Expert on the Right to Development, Mr John Hall, Corporate Manager, Rio Tinto and Mr Mohammed Abul Khayer, Grameem Bank,
- representatives from the Hong Kong government, non-governmental sector and business community,
- three representatives from the Forum Secretariat.

A full report on the workshop will be distributed at the Sixth Annual Meeting and placed on the Forum's website soon.

3. TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECTS

The objectives of these projects, which are developed jointly with partner institutions or governments, are to:

- improve the levels of appropriate skills and knowledge among members and staff of national institutions in the region
- enhance national institution structures and procedures in accordance with the Paris Principles¹ to facilitate a more effective system to protect and promote human rights
- provide governments in the region wishing to establish a national institution with assistance and information as requested to facilitate the development of a national institution in accordance with the Paris Principles.

Projects developed within the framework of the Forum generally fall into two categories:

- country-based or bilateral projects which tend to be medium to long term technical assistance activities focused on the development and strengthening of national human rights institutions and
- regional projects which focus on identified areas of common need or concern in the region.

The Secretariat's approach to developing technical cooperation projects is a very practical one. Forum members help and support each other to strengthen human rights observance through the provision of joint training, advice and institutional capacity building programs.

The Forum is not a funding agency and has no funds of its own to apply to technical cooperation activities. Rather, its role is to develop proposals that can then be taken to potential funding organisations, whether government or private, for consideration. It is important therefore that any proposals for technical cooperation be developed in a comprehensive manner and in formats that fit with the requirements of the funding agency.

The Forum has found that this comprehensive approach can be facilitated through the mechanism of a *needs assessment mission*. Such missions have been undertaken with respect to Indonesia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Nepal. The result of such a mission is a global view of the requirements of the commission or government concerned. It is likely that potential donors will be more likely to take a favourable view of project proposals if they are satisfied that a comprehensive assessment has been made. Such an assessment serves the further useful purpose of facilitating coordination among the various activities of different donors with respect to the same commission or government.

3.1 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF NEPAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION

In July 2000 the Director of the Forum participated in a joint mission with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Program to Nepal. The purpose of the mission was to

¹ *Principles Relating To The Status Of National Institutions*, Commission on Human Rights resolution 1992/54 of 3 March 1992. Annex (Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1992, Supplement No. 2 (E/1992/22), chap. II, sect. A): General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993, annex.

work with the recently established Human Rights Commission of Nepal to develop a program of technical cooperation and to encourage donor coordination in the provision of assistance to the Commission. The mission was successful in developing a comprehensive technical assistance framework. A second visit in September 2000 by two international consultants, again representing the Forum and the United Nations, undertook further work on the details of the comprehensive program of assistance. The program is currently being implemented by a range of international donors.

3.2 EAST TIMOR

In September 2001 the Director of the Forum participated in a seminar on ‘The Building of Institutions to Protect Human Rights in East Timor, in Dili, East Timor. With the recently elected Constituent Assembly convening in East Timor on 15 September to draft the future Constitution of East Timor, the seminar was organised by UNTAET to focus debate on what measures need to be taken to protect the human rights of East Timorese people. The Director focused on the advantages of establishing a national human rights institution. The consensus of the seminar was that there should be a constitutionally protected national human rights commission established in East Timor.

3.3 TRAINING AND INTERNSHIPS

The Secretariat facilitated the provision of two weeks training to Mr Jagat Singh, Complaints and Investigation Officer of the Fiji Human Rights Commission with the Commissions of New Zealand and Australia in May 2001.

The Secretariat was also pleased to receive a number of student internships from a variety of academic institutions from within and outside the region during the reporting period.

4. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

The exchange of information was identified by Forum members at their first meeting as one of the Forum Secretariat’s fundamental roles. The objectives in this area are to

- improve awareness among political and administrative decision-makers and the wider community of the value and importance of national human rights institutions
- improve awareness among relevant regional governments and agencies of appropriate functions, powers, structures and legislation for national institutions established in accordance with the Paris Principles
- improve awareness among regional national human rights institutions of the legislation, casework, techniques, procedures and outcomes of other national institutions both within and outside the region
- provide information about Forum activities to member institutions, governments, United Nations agencies, non-government organisations and the general community.

The Forum encourages the participation of governments and human rights non-government organisations in the annual Forum meetings as observers. This has been an important process to promote the establishment of new institutions, the effectiveness of existing institutions, closer partnerships with governments and non-government organisations and greater awareness of the Forum's activities.

Members of the Forum and Secretariat staff also promote the work of national human rights institutions and the Forum by attending and speaking at various international, regional and national seminars and meetings.

In addition the Secretariat manages the Forum's website and publishes regular editions of the *Forum Bulletin* to keep Forum members, governments and non-government organisations informed of important policy, legal, administrative and training developments in the region.

4.1 VIDEO DOCUMENTARY

One of the major projects for the reporting period was the production of a video documentary on the role and functions of national institutions in the Asia Pacific region. During the year a film crew undertook filming in Fiji, Indonesia and India. Issues examined included the role of national institutions in promoting women's rights, combating human rights violations in Aceh and eliminating child labour. The documentary has now been finalised and will be shown at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Forum. The documentary will also be distributed widely across the region.

5. FORUM ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The Secretariat organises and services the annual meetings and workshops of the Forum; implements decisions of the Forum; undertakes research; develops technical cooperation projects; seeks funding for projects and facilitates the provision of expert assistance to governments in the region concerning the establishment of national institutions.

6. OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other significant activities that have been undertaken during the last 12 months have included the following:

6.1 REGIONAL SYSTEMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION IN ASIA

In October 2000 the Director of the Forum participated in a seminar on 'Regional Systems of Human Rights Protection in Asia', held in Strasbourg, France. The seminar was organised and funded by the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, a major German donor, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

The objective of the seminar was to advocate for the development of a regional government-to-government human rights mechanism for the Asian region. The seminar was attended by approximately 40 invited participants from South Asian and South-East Asian countries. Representatives from the European, Inter-American and African regional human rights mechanisms were also in attendance.

6.2 SECOND MEETING OF INTER-AMERICAN NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In November 2000 the Director of the Forum attended the Second Annual Meeting of Inter-American National Institutions, held in Mexico City, Mexico. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss two issues – (i) the possible formation of a regional network of American national institutions based on the successful model of the Forum and (ii) the role of American national institutions in the forthcoming World Conference Against Racism.

The meeting resolved to establish an inter-American network of national institutions. The Mexican Commission agreed to act as the interim host institution for the Secretariat of the network.

6.3 NINTH UNITED NATIONS WORKSHOP ON HUMAN RIGHTS ARRANGEMENTS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

In February 2001 the Forum was invited to attend and participate in the 9th United Nations Asia Pacific Workshop on Regional Co-operation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which was held in Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop was attended by representatives from over 35 countries, international experts, United Nations agencies and non-government organisations. A major component of the meeting was an examination of two Forum activities – the regional workshop on the rights of women held in Fiji in May 2000 and the 5th annual meeting of the Forum. A representative from the Forum Secretariat gave a formal presentation on both of these issues. At the conclusion of the meeting regional governments agreed on a framework document for the provision of technical assistance to encourage and promote regional human rights arrangements. The framework document explicitly recognises the role of Forum and calls for the provision of funds for the establishment and strengthening of national institutions.

6.4 REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR ASIA FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

In February 2001 the Forum participated in an inter-governmental regional preparatory meeting for Asia for the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, which was held in Tehran, Iran. The Forum was represented at the meeting by an officer of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

6.5 COMMONWEALTH BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In March 2001 the Director of the Forum was invited by the Commonwealth Secretariat to participate in an Expert Group to develop ‘Best Practice Principles for National Institutions in the Commonwealth’. Representatives from a select range of Commonwealth national institutions and the United Nations were in attendance. The Commonwealth Best Practice Principles will be launched in association with Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in October 2001.

6.6 57TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In April 2001 the Director of the Forum participated in the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Items of business of particular importance to the work of the Forum were resolutions relating to national human rights institutions and regional human rights arrangements in the Asia Pacific. A formal statement was presented to the United Nations Commission on the work of the Forum, the role of national institutions in United Nations meetings and the importance of the Paris Principles. In addition, meetings were held with representatives of the United Nations, including the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Mary Robinson, concerning United Nations activities in relation to national institutions.

6.7 UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON GLOBALISATION

In May 2001 the Forum was invited to attend and make a formal presentation to a United Nations Regional Workshop on Globalisation which was held in Malaysia. The Forum was represented at the meeting by an officer from the New Zealand Human Rights Commission and a representative of the Secretariat.

7. FORUM TRANSITION PROCESS

7.1 DRAFT CONSTITUTION, STRATEGIC AND BUSINESS PLANS

At the 5th annual meeting of the Forum held in New Zealand in 2000, Forum members provided in principle support for the Forum to proceed to incorporation as an independent entity. Since that meeting a working group of the Forum, comprised of representatives of the host institution (the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission), the OHCHR, the Forum Secretariat and the Regional Coordinator of the Forum (the New Zealand Human Rights Commission), have been meeting on a regular basis to work through the various organisational, administrative and financial issues required to enable the smooth transition of the Forum to a new legal structure.

The deliberations of the working group have been guided by the Paris Principles; the vision and mission of the Forum; and to a commitment to ensure the full participation of all Forum members. Matters discussed have included the future structure of an independent Forum, ensuring the Forum has adequate funds to operate effectively and, the future constitutional basis of the Forum. During the reporting period the working group developed a strategic plan, a fundraising plan, a business plan and a draft constitution. Forum members were briefed on developments at the 57th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in April 2001.

The following papers on this topic have been distributed to all Forum members:

- (i) Draft Strategic and Fund Development Plan
- (ii) Business Plan
- (iii) Draft Constitution
- (iv) Explanatory Memorandum on the constitution
- (v) Proposed resolutions for adoption.

These documents will be discussed by members at the 6th annual meeting of the Forum.

7.2 FUNDRAISING

When proposing the establishment of the Forum, members were strongly of the view that a secretariat would be necessary if the APF was to function effectively as a mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights in the region through the strengthening and establishment of national institutions. Without a secretariat to manage an ongoing program of activities, the Forum would only consist of an annual exchange of views, which would have difficulty in producing substantive outputs. But for a secretariat to produce the results that were expected of it, an appropriate level of resources would need to be mobilised.

A range of donors have provided financial assistance to enable the Forum to become operational. The Australian Government, through AusAID, has provided \$US112,500 per year towards the 'core' operational costs of the Forum and additional funds on a project-by-project basis. For example, AusAID provided \$US1 million over two years towards a Forum project to assist the Indonesian Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM). The OHCHR has, on average, provided \$US100,000 a year towards the activities of the Forum on a project-by-project basis. The New Zealand Government has, on average, provided \$US32,500 per year towards project activities. Funding has also been received on a smaller scale from the Japan Foundation, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung and Rio Tinto.

While these funding sources have been very much welcome, they have not constituted a solid or sufficient basis for an adequate core program of Forum activities. In recognition of this fact and in line with the Forum's increased responsibilities, the Secretariat has approached donors for an increase in funding. This approach has been successful with the following outcomes:

- AusAID has doubled its contribution to \$US250,000 per year for the next three years for 'core' activities (and in addition AusAID will continue to provide additional funds on a project by project basis).
- The Danish aid agency, DANIDA, will start to contribute an initial amount of \$US50,000 per year for the next three years towards Forum activities.
- The Forum has been in discussion with the OHCHR to develop a comprehensive program of support for the next 18 months. The project has yet to receive formal approval – but at an officer level it is proposed that the Forum receive an increase in funds to \$US730,000 for the 18 month period 1 July 2001 to 31 December 2002 for both 'core' activities and specific projects. In addition, further funds for specific APF projects relating to HIV/AIDS and Trafficking will be funded from a separate UN budget allocation.
- The Forum has been in discussion with the New Zealand government to receive a more consistent line of funds for 'core' activities. Discussions have occurred at officer level and it is proposed that the Forum receive an increase in its contribution to approximately \$US50,000 per year for the next three years for

'core' activities. Further discussions with New Zealand will take place following the sixth annual meeting.

In addition to approaching our traditional donors, the APF has embarked on a fundraising process with the aid of a professional international fundraising firm. Further details of this process will be discussed at the Sixth Annual Meeting.

8. FUTURE FORUM ACTIVITIES

The following significant activities are anticipated to be undertaken over the next three year period. For detailed information on the proposed implementation schedule of these activities please refer to the Forum's Business Plan which has previously been distributed to all members.

In keeping with the objectives of the Forum, it is proposed that future Forum operations will encompass both **core operations** and **project operations**.

Core operations cover the professional activities necessary to expand mutual support, co-operation and joint activity among member commissions. This includes activities such as the annual meeting of the Forum, information exchanges (e.g. the Forum Bulletin), training and development activities and the development of joint positions on issues of common concern.

Project operations cover the project-based activities necessary to support requests from governments in the region for assistance in the establishment and development of national institutions or specific requests for specialised assistance from Forum members or other agencies. This will include activities such as regional workshops, the Advisory Council of Jurists, training and development for commission members and staff as well as project design, implementation and evaluation.

8.1 CORE OPERATIONS

The Forum's (APF) program of core operations for the next three years includes:

| 2001 to 2002 | |
|---------------------|--|
| • | Sixth Annual Meeting of the Forum |
| - | <i>Sri Lanka, 24 to 27 September 2001</i> |
| • | Advisory Services |
| - | <i>Advice and support to member institutions on the effective implementation of their mandates</i> |
| - | <i>Information dissemination to Governments and Civil Society</i> |
| • | Educational Activities |
| - | <i>Publication of Forum Bulletin</i> |
| - | <i>Website management and updates</i> |
| - | <i>Speaking engagements</i> |
| • | International Law Development |
| - | <i>Participation in annual UN Meeting on Regional Human Rights Arrangements in the Asia Pacific (and the various activities flowing from the regional framework)</i> |
| - | <i>Participation in annual UN Commission on Human Rights Meeting</i> |
| - | <i>Participation in World Conference Against Racism, August 2001</i> |
| - | <i>Participation in CHOGM, October 2001</i> |

2002 to 2003

- **Seventh Annual Meeting of the Forum** (*location to be decided*)
- **Advisory Services**
 - *Advice and support to member institutions on the effective implementation of their mandates*
 - *Information dissemination to Governments and Civil Society*
- **Educational Activities**
 - *Publication of Forum Bulletin*
 - *Website management and updates*
 - *Speaking engagements*
- **International Law Development**
 - *Participation in annual UN Meeting on Regional Human Rights Arrangements in the Asia Pacific (and the various activities flowing from the regional framework)*
 - *Participation in annual UN Commission on Human Rights Meeting*
 - *Other meetings as appropriate*

2003 to 2004

- **Eighth Annual Meeting of the Forum** (*location to be decided*)
- **Advisory Services**
 - *Advice and support to member institutions on the effective implementation of their mandates*
 - *Information dissemination to Governments and Civil Society*
- **Educational Activities**
 - *Publication of Forum Bulletin*
 - *Website management and updates*
 - *Speaking engagements*
- **International Law Development**
 - *Participation in annual UN Meeting on Regional Human Rights Arrangements in the Asia Pacific (and the various activities flowing from the regional framework)*
 - *Participation in annual UN Commission on Human Rights Meeting*
 - *Other meetings as appropriate*

Further details on the above projects are provided below:

- **Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum (3rd quarter 2001, 2002, 2003)**

The annual meetings of the APF are the largest and most comprehensive regular human rights meetings in the Asia Pacific region. They are a mechanism for the practical advancement of human rights, particularly because they bring together national institutions, the UN, governments and NGOs in a harmonious, practical and largely non-political setting. Through this mechanism the APF has demonstrated its role as a catalyst for the mobilisation of technical co-operation funds for human rights initiatives and as a facilitator for the establishment of new national institutions.

The APF held its first annual meeting in Darwin, Australia in July 1996, its second in New Delhi, India in September 1997, its third in Jakarta, Indonesia in September 1998, its fourth in Manila, the Philippines in September 1999 and its fifth in Rotorua, New Zealand in August 2000. Each was a considerably larger meeting than the one

before, indicating the strong interest in the Asia Pacific region in the promotion of national institutions. The New Delhi meeting was opened by the Prime Minister of India, the Jakarta meeting was opened by the President of Indonesia, the Manila meeting was opened by the Secretary of Justice of the Philippines on behalf of the President and the Rotorua meeting was opened by the Attorney General and Associate Minister of Justice of New Zealand.

In 1996 the Darwin meeting set the foundations for the co-operation of national institutions in the region by the establishment of the APF. The meeting agreed to a core set of basic principles by which the APF operates. The Darwin meeting therefore symbolised a new and much needed direction for regional human rights co-operation in the Asia Pacific.

In 1997 the New Delhi meeting reaffirmed the commitment of participants to fundamental human rights principles, including the universality and indivisibility of human rights. The meeting considered that the APF should increase its efforts to promote and implement regional, multilateral and bilateral programs of practical technical assistance. The meeting addressed the issues of national human rights complaints mechanisms and child sex exploitation and decided in principle to establish an international human rights law advisory panel. The Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission was admitted as the APF's sixth member.

In 1998 the Jakarta meeting focused in particular on economic and social rights, in the context of the economic crisis affecting Asia. It also formally established an Advisory Council of Jurists to assist in developing regional human rights jurisprudence, it agreed to establish a Forum web-site and decided to hold a workshop on the theme of *National Institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations: Working in Partnership*. The level of participation by NGOs was a feature of the Jakarta meeting.

In 1999 the Manila meeting continued the APF's focus on economic, social and cultural rights together with an undertaking to explore closer engagement with relevant organisations (such as financial institutions and non-state actors). The meeting established a network of focal points on the human rights of women, including the issue of trafficking, within each APF member institution. The APF also decided to hold a regional workshop on *The Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Advancing the Human Rights of Women*, in Suva, Fiji in May 2000. At the meeting the APF agreed to develop two references on the death penalty and child pornography on the internet for the Advisory Council of Jurists. The Fiji Human Rights Commission was admitted as the APF's seventh member.

In 2000 the Rotorua meeting focussed on international, regional and domestic strategies for the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. Participants noted that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights could be used as a 'shield' against the implementation of structural adjustment measures that violate the provisions of the Covenant. The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal was admitted as the APF's eighth member. At the meeting APF members developed a co-ordinated position in preparation for the *World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*. A highlight of the meeting was the inaugural session of the Advisory Council of Jurists established by

the APF at its Third Annual meeting in Jakarta in 1998. The Advisory Council, lead by its President, Justice Silvia Cartwright (also recently appointed Governor-General of New Zealand), developed reports for the Forum's two references on the death penalty and child pornography on the Internet.

Further details on all these meetings, including the full text of the concluding statements and background papers, can be found on the APF's web-site – www.apf.hreoc.gov.au

In 2001 the sixth annual meeting of the APF will be held in Sri Lanka from 24 to 27 September. The meeting will bring together participants from regional national institutions, governments and NGOs. The central objective of the sixth annual meeting is to enhance the protection and promotion of human rights in the Asia Pacific through the promotion and strengthening of national institutions. The approach and content of the meeting have been informed by the commitments agreed to by APF members, as outlined in the Rotorua Statement of Conclusions. The meeting will promote the following outcomes:

- (i) Focus greater attention to the role of the APF and its member national institutions in the protection and promotion of human rights at a regional level;
- (ii) Establish a new APF legal and managerial structure and the set strategic goals for the APF over the next three years;
- (iii) Develop practical strategies for addressing the needs of newly established human rights commissions – focussing on the Fiji Human Rights Commission and the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal;
- (iv) Focus greater attention to the developing relationship between NGOs in the Asia Pacific and national institutions;
- (v) Encourage greater dialogue and the development of practical initiatives between national institutions, governments and NGOs in strengthening human rights protection and promotion mechanisms for people with HIV/AIDS;
- (vi) Develop practical initiatives between national institutions, trans-national corporations, governments and NGOs for the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights;
- (vii) Examine the outcomes of the UN World Conference on Racism and the role of the APF and national institutions in the implementation of these outcomes; and
- (viii) Review the APF's operations for the past year, including references to the Advisory Council of Jurists, technical assistance programs and the Regional Workshop on the Role of national institutions and other mechanisms in the Protection and Promotion of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which was held in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in July 2001.

The dates, host institution and theme of the 7th, 8th and 9th annual meetings will be determined by APF members.

- *Advisory Services*

The APF Secretariat provides a wide range of advisory services to member institutions, prospective members, governments and non-governmental organizations.

This can range from advice on the nature and status of national institutions to detailed legislative drafting and legal advice. Governments, for example, often provide a copy of draft legislation establishing a national institution to the APF for comment prior to its introduction into their respective legislatures. This requires that the APF undertake a detailed analysis of the legislation to ensure that the specific provisions are reflective of the mandate, role and functions of national institutions as set out in the Paris Principles. Detailed discussions with Government representatives from both the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Justice are then often required to go through specific drafting issues. Alternatively NGOs will also request briefings from the APF on specific issues concerning the appropriate composition of a national institution to ensure that it complies with the Paris Principles. To aid in the development and establishment of national institutions, the members of the APF have adopted a set of 'Best Practice Principles' outlining the steps that should be undertaken by both Governments and civil society in the pre-establishment phase of creating a national institution.

- ***Educational Activities***

The exchange of information was identified by APF members at their first annual meeting as one of the APF Secretariat's fundamental roles. The APF Secretariat disseminates information through a wide range of mechanisms on the role and functions of national institutions and the activities of the APF. The objectives of this component are to:

- improve awareness among political and administrative decision-makers and the wider community of the value and importance of national institutions;
- improve awareness among relevant regional governments and agencies of the appropriate functions, powers, structures and legislation for national institutions established in accordance with the Paris Principles;
- improve awareness among regional national institutions of the legislation, casework, techniques, procedures and outcomes of other national institutions both within and outside the region;
- provide information about APF activities to members institutions, governments (inside and outside the region), UN agencies, NGOs and the general community.

The APF also encourages the participation of governments and human rights NGOs in the APF's annual meetings as observers. This has been an important process to encourage the establishment of new institutions, improve the effectiveness of existing institutions and promote a greater awareness of the APF's activities. In addition, there have been numerous exchanges of visits by government officials and NGOs interested in acquiring information about national institutions. Members of the APF and Secretariat staff also promote the work of national institutions and the APF by attending and speaking at various international, regional and national seminars and meetings as well as through bilateral discussions with governments, regional and international organisations and NGOs. During the three year period the APF will continue to regularly publish the *Forum Bulletin*, keep the website updated and distribute the video documentary widely.

- ***International Law Development***

The APF and its individual member national institutions have had a long history in participating in the development of international law. For example, the recently adopted Optional Protocol on the Sexual Exploitation of Children under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was initially an initiative of Asia Pacific national institutions. Given the prominence of trafficking of women and children in the region for sexual purposes, the national institutions of the region strongly advocated during the UN World Conference on Human Rights that there was a need to develop a specific Optional Protocol dealing with the sexual exploitation of children. Asia Pacific national institutions also developed a detailed discussion paper on the various approaches that such an Optional Protocol could take and actively participated in the UN Working Group established to develop the Protocol.

The APF therefore takes an active role in participating in major international activities. The APF makes an annual statement to the UN Commission on Human Rights and participates in the discussions surrounding the annual resolution on national institutions that is adopted in the UN Commission. It is pleasing to note that the resolution is adopted by consensus and that each year an increasing number of States sponsor the resolution.

The APF is also invited to formally participate in a range of UN and other international meetings. This often takes the form of preparing background papers and being a ‘keynote’ speaker. For example, in 2001 the UN requested that the APF make a keynote presentation to the annual workshop on the development of human rights arrangements in the Asia Pacific region and a workshop on the impact of globalisation on human rights.

8.2 PROJECT OPERATIONS

This section of the report outlines the APF’s project operations for the next three years. A common element of the APF’s project activities during this period are:

- (i) the APF’s regional thematic workshops,
- (ii) the operation and servicing of the APF’s Advisory Council of Jurists,
- (iii) the implementation of a regional training program on forensic investigatory techniques and
- (iv) the management of a regional staff exchange program between APF member institutions and the APF Secretariat.

As indicated by the project list, a significant component of the APF’s work is in program development, identification, design and completion. As per the operational approach of the APF as a ‘not for profit’ organisation, implementation of these projects requires the acquisition of specific project funds.

2001 to 2002

- **Thematic Regional Workshops**
 - *Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Hong Kong, 11 to 13 July 2001 (completed)*
 - *National Institutions and HIV/AIDS in the Asia Pacific Region, Melbourne, Australia, 5 to 7 October 2001*
- **Advisory Council of Jurists**
 - *Implementation of recommendations on references on (i) the death penalty and (ii) child pornography on the internet*
 - *Determination of a reference on economic, social and cultural rights*
- **Regional Investigatory Techniques Training Project**
 - *Implementation of training project focusing on member institution complaint investigation staff and law enforcement officials*
- **National Human Rights Institutions Regional Staff Exchange Project**
 - *Implementation of regional staff exchange project between APF member institutions and the APF Secretariat*
- **Country Program Development**
 - *Country development program mission to new conforming commissions (Mongolia, Thailand TBC)*
- **Project Identification**
 - *Advice to Governments and NGOs on the establishment of national institutions in compliance with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Feasibility Analysis and Project Preparation**
 - *Advice to Donor Agencies on specific country project needs to comply with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Project Designs and Appraisals**
 - *Design of new projects to implement to comply with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Project Implementation and Monitoring**
 - *Implementation of projects arising out of the Nepal Human Rights Commission joint needs assessment mission with the UN*
 - *Implementation of specific programs (e.g. forensic investigation skills to Fiji, a training project to promote the capacity of APF members to address gender and human rights issues)*
- **Project Completion and Evaluation**
 - *Evaluation of initiatives undertaken*

2002 to 2003

- **Thematic Regional Workshops**
 - *Human Rights Education, the Media and Public Affairs, (location to be advised)*
 - *Combating Trafficking of Women and Children, (location to be advised)*
- **Advisory Council of Jurists** (*consideration of topics yet to be determined*)
- **Regional Investigatory Techniques Training Project**
 - *Implementation of training project focusing on member institution complaint investigation staff and law enforcement officials*
- **National Human Rights Institutions Regional Staff Exchange Project**
 - *Implementation of regional staff exchange project between APF member institutions and the APF Secretariat*
- **Country Program Development**
 - *Country development program mission to new conforming commissions (Malaysia, Republic of Korea TBC)*
- **Project Identification**
 - *Advice to Governments and NGOs on the establishment of national institutions in compliance with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Feasibility Analysis and Project Preparation**
 - *Advice to Donor Agencies on specific country project needs to comply with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Project Designs and Appraisals**
 - *Design of new projects to implement to comply with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Project Implementation and Monitoring**
 - *Implementation of specific projects (e.g. prevention of trafficking of women and children between the Indian and Nepalese Human Rights Commissions)*
- **Project Completion and Evaluation**
 - *Evaluation of initiatives undertaken*

2003 to 2004

- **Thematic Regional Workshops** (*theme to be determined*)
- **Advisory Council of Jurists** (*consideration of topics yet to be determined*)
- **Regional Investigatory Techniques Training Project**
 - *Implementation of training project focusing on member institution complaint investigation staff and law enforcement officials*
- **National Human Rights Institutions Regional Staff Exchange Project**
 - *Implementation of regional staff exchange project between APF member institutions and the APF Secretariat*
- **Country Program Development**
 - *Country development program mission to new conforming commissions (East Timor, one other TBC)*
- **Project Identification**
 - *Advice to Governments and NGOs on the establishment of national institutions in compliance with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Feasibility Analysis and Project Preparation**
 - *Advice to Donor Agencies on specific country project needs to comply with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Project Designs and Appraisals**
 - *Design of new projects to implement to comply with minimum standards (TBC)*
- **Project Implementation and Monitoring**
 - *Implementation of specific programs (e.g. a pilot project on developing a handbook/guidelines for national institutions in dealing with HIV/AIDS discrimination in association with UNAIDS; a pilot project to assist Forum members to implement the UN Guidelines in Internally Displaced Persons)*
- **Project Completion and Evaluation**
 - *Evaluation of initiatives undertaken*

Further details on these projects are provided below:

- **Workshop on HIV/AIDS and national institutions in the Asia Pacific region (Australia, October 2001)²**

The APF has organised four thematic workshops since its establishment in 1996. These have been *National institutions and the role of the media*, in Indonesia in 1998, *National institutions and NGOs: Working in Partnership*, in Sri Lanka in 1999, *National institutions and the human rights of women*, in Fiji in 2000 and *National institutions and economic, social and cultural rights* in China in 2001.

This particular workshop focuses on the relationship between HIV/AIDS and human rights. In the twenty years since the first cases of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome were reported there have been almost 22 million AIDS-related deaths and a further 36 million cases of HIV infection.³

In the Asia Pacific region there are some 6.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS.⁴ The extent of the epidemic across the region can be broadly categorised as *established* (Thailand, Cambodia, Burma/Myanmar, Laos), *exploding* (India, Papua New Guinea, Nepal, China and possibly Vietnam and Sri Lanka), and *emerging* (Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia).

The protection and promotion of human rights are essential to preventing the spread of HIV and to mitigating the social and economic impact of the pandemic. At the Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in June 2001, Member States recognised that the realisation of human rights for all is an essential element in a global response to HIV/AIDS and agreed on the need to address the factors that make individuals particularly vulnerable to HIV infection, including poverty, lack of education, discrimination, lack of information and/or commodities for self-protection, and sexual exploitation of women, girls and boys, including for commercial reasons. The UNGA Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS calls, within specific periods of time, on States to enact, strengthen or enforce, as appropriate, legislative and other measures to eliminate discrimination against, and ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people living with HIV/AIDS as well as by members of vulnerable groups. It also stresses the need for national strategies that lead to the empowerment of women and calls for the strengthening of monitoring mechanisms for HIV/AIDS related human rights.

UNAIDS has identified national human rights institutions as having a critical role to play in addressing HIV/AIDS-related human rights issues and has called on national institutions to address HIV/AIDS-related human rights issues.⁵ According to UNAIDS there are five ways in which national institutions can strengthen their work regarding HIV/AIDS:

- (i) Investigating violations of human rights that occur in the context of HIV/AIDS;

² To be funded out of GLO/99/RE2 *Integrating HIV/AIDS in Human Rights Activities* in collaboration with UNAIDS

³ "20 Years On: The Situation in Asia and the Pacific" Website of the Sixth International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, 7 June 2001 at http://www.icaap.conf.au/news/200106_20years.asp

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Speech by Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS to the 57th Session on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 11 April 2001

- (ii) Conducting public inquiries focussing on HIV/AIDS related human rights violations;
- (iii) Receiving, and where appropriate redressing complaints of HIV/AIDS-related human rights violations;
- (iv) Providing advice and assistance to governments in the area of human rights and HIV/AIDS;
- (v) Conducting human rights education in the context of HIV/AIDS.⁶

The Sixth International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP6) will be held in Melbourne, Australia from 5 to 10 October 2001. The organisers of ICAAP6 have approached the APF to run a workshop within the ICAAP program on the role of national institutions in the protection and promotion of HIV/AIDS issues. In parallel with this approach, the APF has held discussions with UNAIDS and the OHCHR in developing the capacity of national institutions to address this issue. This project will be jointly funded by OHCHR/UNAIDS.

The workshop brings together the following participants:

- (i) *Forum Members* – one representative from the national institutions of Australia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Nepal, New Zealand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.
- (ii) *United Nations* – representatives from UNAIDS and the OHCHR.
- (iii) *Non-Government Organisations* – representatives from regional and national NGOs specialising in HIV/AIDS related issues.
- (iv) *Relevant Institutions* – human rights institutions that are not as yet members of the APF including the National Human Rights Commissions of Malaysia, Mongolia, Thailand and the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission.
- (v) *Governments* – representatives from governments from the Asia and Pacific regions.
- (vi) *HIV-AIDS experts* – the Forum Secretariat has identified appropriate experts to address the workshop and will seek to draw on the expertise of speakers attending other sessions of the ICAAP meeting.

The program for the workshop focuses on HIV/AIDS-related human rights, with a focus on national issues including informed voluntary consent and testing, discrimination in health care and employment, access to information and services, and how the core functions of national institutions – complaint handling and investigation, education and promotion and legal reform – can address these issues. The workshop will also address regional issues of concern including migration, trafficking and sex tourism. APF workshops are organised to ensure maximum participant interaction through plenary and parallel working sessions.

- ***Workshop on Human Rights Education and the Media (1st quarter 2002)***

This proposed workshop called for under the *Beijing Programme of Action* will identify current and possible future areas of co-operation and collaboration between

⁶ Statement by Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS to the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, Geneva, 18-20 April 2001

national institutions and the media, and consider mechanisms through which more effective co-operation and collaboration can take place to promote human rights education. By bringing together representatives of regional national institutions, governments and key media representatives, the project seeks to strengthen and promote information exchanges and the establishment of best practice standards and the development of networks between national institutions, the APF, governments, regional and national human rights NGOs and the media for the promotion of human rights and human rights education activities.

The Workshop will incorporate both plenary and working-group sessions, with an emphasis on exchanging knowledge on 'best practice' and facilitating the building of national and regional networks in a team-building environment. APF workshops have a strong 'outcomes focus', with the aim of producing concrete and practical proposals for action.

- ***Workshop on Combating Trafficking of Women (4th quarter 2002)***

This proposed workshop will focus on the role of national institutions in combating the illegal trafficking of women and children. The workshop will identify current and possible future areas of co-operation and collaboration between the APF, national institutions and law enforcement bodies and consider mechanisms through which more effective co-operation and collaboration can take place. The workshop will bring together representatives of regional national institutions, governments and key NGO representatives.

- ***Strengthening the capacity of the Nepal and India Human Rights Commissions to deal with trafficking (4th quarter 2002)***

As a follow-up to the above noted trafficking workshop, consultations will be organised between the India and Nepal Human Rights Commissions to strengthen and promote information exchanges between the two Commissions and developing concrete proposals for joint action on the issue of trafficking. The output of the consultations will be a proposed joint project between the two Commissions aimed at combating the trans-boarder trafficking of women and children

- ***APF Regional Workshop (1st quarter 2004)***

The theme and host institution of this workshop will be determined in consultation with APF members and will reflect the outcomes of previous annual APF meetings. For example, one issue put forward by the Indonesian Human Rights Commission to which members agreed is to hold a workshop on the role of national institutions in combating inter-religious conflict.

- ***Advisory Council of Jurists***

This initiative is aimed at strengthening the operations of the Advisory Council of Jurists. The APF established the Council on 9 September 1998. The Council advises the APF and its member national institutions on the interpretation and application of international human rights standards. The inaugural meeting of the Advisory Council

was held from 7 to 9 August 2000 in conjunction with the fifth annual meeting of the APF.

The establishment of the Advisory Council of Jurists under the aegis of the APF is a significant advance in the protection and promotion of human rights in the region. For the first time a regional juridical body is in a position to review and assess human rights issues in the Asia Pacific region. It serves the important practical purpose of providing advice to APF member national institutions on the interpretation and application of international human rights jurisprudence. This development is both timely and important and provides a strategic framework within which to further advance the application of international human rights standards. In addition to developing regional jurisprudence on international human rights, the initiative will further strengthen the effectiveness and capacity of national institutions in the region.

This project has two principal objectives:

- (i) to strengthen and support the work of the Advisory Council of Jurists, comprised of eminent jurists from the Asia Pacific region, in advising the APF and national human rights institutions in the region on the interpretation and application of international human rights standards; and
- (ii) to develop, through the provision of advice by the Council, an Asia Pacific regional jurisprudence on international human rights standards.

Activities will focus on the establishment of a support unit for the Council within the APF Secretariat, assistance for Council members to meet annually to deliberate on issues referred to it and on research and the preparation of background papers and advisory opinions.

- ***Forensic Investigatory Techniques component***

This project is designed to assist the governments and peoples of Fiji, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka - and potentially of Bangladesh, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Korea - to secure sustained and effective improvements in the promotion and protection of human rights. This will be done by strengthening the capacity of national institutions and law enforcement agencies in each country to effectively investigate serious violations of human rights. A regional program of training in investigations skills, focusing on international human rights standards and best practice is proposed. An important element of the project will be a train-the-trainer component, thereby promoting sustainability beyond the time frame of the project itself.

A significant focus of the mandates and workloads of national institutions in the Asia Pacific region is the investigation of allegations of human rights abuses. Such allegations are often made against police or military personnel and typically involve an incident or incidents of serious human rights abuse such as extrajudicial execution, disappearance, torture or arbitrary detention - often on the basis of political, racial, ethnic or religious affiliation. The investigations into such allegations are often high profile and politically significant and are important to the credibility of both human rights commissions and to governments.

It is therefore critical that members and staff in national institutions who have responsibility for managing and conducting human rights investigations should have a high level of knowledge of international human rights standards and competence in investigations techniques and that those techniques should be in accordance with current international best practice.

Activities include the development and implementation of a regional Human Rights Investigation Training Program, as well as a Training-of-Trainers (TOT) component to promote project sustainability. Appropriate training materials and manuals, including a Human Rights Investigations TOT Manual, will be developed, produced and disseminated under the project. The component will be implemented over a period of two years.

By the conclusion of the initiative, approximately 80 members, middle-senior level staff and officers from the participating human rights commissions and law enforcement agencies of at least five Asia Pacific countries will have been trained in human rights investigations techniques and procedures. Of these, approximately 40 will have been trained in train-the-trainer techniques so that their institutions will have the capacity to provide training to members and staff in country. These training activities will be backed by the production and dissemination of manuals on both investigations training and train-the-trainer skills.

The forensic investigative techniques component will have the following direct positive impacts:

- (i) The development of expertise within participating commissions and law enforcement agencies in the investigation of serious violations of human rights;
- (ii) Improved effectiveness and efficiency of the participating commissions and law enforcement agencies in the investigation of human rights violations;
- (iii) Formation of a capable regional asset in the form of skilled investigations trainers within the participating commissions and law enforcement agencies – and this may serve to promote mutual support and assistance within the region;
- (iv) Improved co-operation between human rights commissions and national law enforcement agencies in the conduct of human rights investigations;
- (v) Development, production and dissemination of appropriate information materials and reference manuals in the conduct of human rights investigations;
- (vi) Greater institutional capacity of the participating commissions and law enforcement agencies to implement their national mandates and meet international human rights obligations;
- (vii) Enhanced public perceptions of, support for, and responsiveness to, the investigations work undertaken by the participating commissions through improvements in the quality of service as a result of such training;
- (viii) Greater regional co-operation in the field of human rights investigations.

- ***Promotion of study and workplace exchanges between members of APF***

The APF took a number of decisions at its first meeting, held in Darwin in July 1996, on information exchanges, training and development of staff, undertaking joint projects and sharing expertise that foreshadowed the desirability of staff exchanges as a means of advancing the promotion and protection of human rights.

At its Third Annual Meeting, held in Jakarta in September 1998, the APF member institutions requested that “... *the Secretariat should prepare a proposal regarding the placement of staff from member commissions in the Secretariat.*”

At its Fourth Annual Meeting, held in Manila in September 1999, the APF member institutions “.. *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 APF, the UN Volunteers Programme (UNV) and the OHCHR have held discussions about the content of a possible program and the responsibilities of the three partners.

The *goal* of this component is to strengthen institutional capacity to promote and protect human rights in the Asia Pacific Region through:

- (i) The transfer of skills and knowledge to APF member institution (APFMI) staff;
- (ii) The implementation of specific activities utilising the resource of staff exchanges; and
- (iii) Expanding the resources available to the APF Secretariat.

The *objectives* are to:

- (i) Successfully implement specific activities at the national level by providing specialist staff and appropriate support;
- (ii) Improve the Secretariat’s effectiveness by adding to the staffing resources available to it; and
- (iii) Improve the effectiveness of APFMIs through exchanges of staff that will benefit both sending and receiving institutions.

This component would have four activities:

- (i) The placement, at a national level, of specialists with individual APFMIs. The specialists, with appropriate national support staff, would implement specific activities appropriate to the circumstances of the APFMI concerned;
- (ii) The placement of APFMI staff in the APF Secretariat;
- (iii) The exchange of staff between APFMIs at a regional level;
- (iv) The exchange of staff, at an inter-regional level, between APFMIs, the Secretariat and national institutions of other regions of the world.

The initiative would be based on the provision of personnel, together with essential support services. As a program that consists essentially of staff placement and exchanges, the various activities could not incorporate elements requiring significant expenditure beyond the provision of staff.

Inputs would include the following:

- (i) Costs of travel, subsistence and salaries of placed personnel; and
- (ii) Project management time on the part of APFMIs, APF Secretariat, OHCHR and UNV required to design appropriate program activities, to select appropriate staff and to provide necessary administrative support.

Project outputs would include the following:

- (i) Implementation of specific activities within APFMI that would not otherwise take place;
- (ii) More effective execution of host APFMI programs through the use of skills and experience that would not otherwise have been available;
- (iii) Transfer of skills and knowledge from placed staff to host staff;
- (iv) Transfer of skills and knowledge from host staff to placed staff;
- (v) More effective execution of Secretariat programs through the availability of additional staff and by more effectively bringing member commission perspectives to bear on issues;
- (vi) Transfer of skills and knowledge from APF Secretariat to placed staff;
- (vii) Stronger and broader linkages between APFMIs and the APF Secretariat; and
- (viii) Strengthened sense of Asia Pacific co-operative effort in the promotion and protection of human rights.

- ***Country Program Development, Project Identification etc***

This component is designed to ensure that the APF can conduct missions to countries and/or relevant institutions to assist in the design of a coordinated comprehensive technical co-operation program to protect and promote human rights. It seeks to build on the already successful joint OHCHR/APF missions to Nepal and Mongolia.

The initiative is premised on three such missions over a 16 month period. These missions may have a variety of purposes including, but not limited to:

- (i) Project Identification
- (ii) Feasibility Analysis and Project Preparation
- (iii) Project Designs and Appraisals
- (iv) Project Implementation and Monitoring
- (v) Project Completion and Evaluation.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Forum members at the 6th Annual Meeting of the Forum note the content of this report.