

NINTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASIA PACIFIC FORUM OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

13th September 2004, Seoul, Republic of Korea

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Introduction

1. The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (the Forum), consisting of the National Human Rights Commissions of the Republic of Korea, Afghanistan, Australia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Palestine, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, held this Ninth Annual Meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea on 13th September 2004.
2. As agreed by Forum Members at their Eighth Annual Meeting, this year's annual meeting was limited to a one-day closed business session of its member institutions and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). This enabled the annual meeting to be held in association with the 7th International Conference of National Institutions from 14th to 17th September 2004.
3. The Forum Councillors expressed their gratitude to the National Human Rights Commission of Korea for hosting the meeting, to the OHCHR for its co-sponsorship and to all the Forum's donors for their financial support. The Forum Councillors expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Commissioners and staff of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea and the secretariat of the Forum for their work in the organisation of the meeting.
4. The Forum Councillors welcomed as observers to the meeting the representatives from the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission, the Jordan National Centre for Human Rights and the Qatar National Human Rights Committee.

Conclusions

The Forum Councillors, during their closed business session:

5. Noted the activity report of the Forum since its last annual meeting and expressed their appreciation for the work of the secretariat. Forum Councillors considered the secretariat's report of the Forum's finances and administration and adopted the Directors, Financial and Audit report of the Forum for the period ending 31 March 2004. Forum Councillors expressed their appreciation for the financial contributions made by (i) member institutions; (ii) the governments of Australia, India, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom and the United States; (iii) donor institutions, including the British Council, Brookings Institution, MacArthur Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy; and (iv) intergovernmental agencies, including the Commonwealth Secretariat and United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the OHCHR).

6. Approved the Forum's annual plan for 2005 and requested the secretariat to consider the Forum's institutional strengthening needs and report back on this issue to the next annual meeting for further discussion.
7. Reaffirmed that the structure and responsibilities of national institutions should be consistent with the Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 49/134) commonly referred to as the 'Paris Principles.' On this basis they admitted the Jordan National Centre for Human Rights as an associate member of the Forum. This increased the Forum's overall membership to 15 institutions. The Forum will provide assistance to the Jordan National Centre for Human Rights to become fully compliant with the Paris Principles.
8. Welcomed the report of the Forum's representative to the accreditation sub-committee of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions (ICC) and thanked her for her work. Forum Councillors congratulated the national human rights institutions of the Republic of Korea and Thailand for their full accreditation to the ICC.
9. Discussed the draft reference to the Advisory Council of Jurists on the issue of the prevention of torture during detention and requested that the secretariat send a revised draft reference to all Forum Councillors for their final consideration and adoption.
10. Welcomed the report of the Senior Executive Officers and commended their efforts to assist in the effective and efficient functioning of national institutions.
11. Considered the training needs of national human rights institutions and welcomed the commissioning of a training needs analysis of all Forum member institutions. Forum Councillors requested that the secretariat disseminate the findings and recommendations of the analysis to all Forum Councillors for their consideration and further action.
12. Considered the issue of the responsiveness of governments to the recommendations and findings of national human rights institutions and shared their experiences.
13. Discussed the potential role of national human rights institutions in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Forum Councillors agreed to advocate for the participation of national human rights institutions in CSW on a basis at least consistent with their participation in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
14. Considered recent threats to the effective functioning of national human rights institutions. In this regard the Forum Councillors condemned the destruction of the regional Herat office of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

15. Thanked the national human rights institutions of Australia and Sri Lanka for agreeing to host during 2005 the APF's regional training workshops on trafficking and internally displaced persons.
16. Unanimously elected the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea (as the current host institution of the annual meeting) to the position of Chairperson of the Forum. The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal (as the host institution for the last annual meeting) and the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (as the host institution for the next annual meeting) were also elected unanimously to the two positions of Deputy Chairpersons.
17. Gratefully accepted the kind offer of the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia to host the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Forum in August 2005.