

STAFF EXCHANGES – UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS

BACKGROUND

At the Third Annual Meeting of the Forum, held in Jakarta in September 1998, Forum members requested that the:

Secretariat should prepare a proposal regarding the placement of staff from member commissions in the Secretariat.

In addition, at the First Meeting of the Forum in Darwin in July 1996, the exchange of staff between Forum members was considered as one of the primary functions of the Forum Secretariat.

In response to these requests, the Forum Secretariat has had discussions with the United Nations Volunteer programme (UNV) to develop a comprehensive staff exchange program.

The UNV was created by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1970 to serve as an operational partner in development cooperation. It reports to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and works through UNDP's country offices around the world. General background information on UNV is attached to this report.

The Secretariat's discussions with UNV have resulted in a proposal to allow staff of Forum member institutions to participate in exchanges with other Forum member institutions and with the Secretariat. The overall structure of the program is set out in the attached 'Letter of Intent.' The Letter of Intent sets out the broad institutional framework and arrangements for collaboration among three parties – the Forum, UNV and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The staff exchange proposal focuses on projects at the national, regional and inter-regional level. The proposal envisages the following possible arrangements:

1. The placement, at a national level, of specialists with individual Forum member institutions
2. The exchange of staff, at a regional level, between participating Forum member institutions and the Forum Secretariat
3. The exchange of staff, at an inter-regional level, between participating Forum member institutions, the Secretariat and national institutions of other regions of the world.

The first option could see a special program developed for an individual Forum member institution. For example, in consultation with the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission, the Forum Secretariat could design a program to strengthen the staff capacities of the Sri Lankan Commission's extensive regional office network. The additional staff located in these offices could come from Sri Lankan nationals, other Forum member institutions who wished to participate, and non-nationals from a variety of different backgrounds. The selection of the staff under this program would be the responsibility of the Sri Lankan Commission with assistance from the Secretariat. UNV would meet the salary, transport and accommodation costs associated with the additional staff. The period of the project could be between one and three years duration.

In the second option, a regional staff exchange program between Forum member institutions and the Forum Secretariat could be developed. Under this arrangement, a number of staff from each participating Forum member institution could be placed at another Forum member institution and the Forum Secretariat. For example, two staff members of the Philippines Commission could be placed at the Indian Commission, while two Indian Commission staff members could be placed at the Indonesian Commission and so on to include all participating Forum member institutions. The Secretariat would also host a number of staff from the participating Forum member institutions. Again, in this regional proposal, each individual

institution would be responsible for the design of the specific projects and the selection of the candidates, in collaboration with the Secretariat. UNV would also meet the salary, transport and accommodation costs associated with this regional staff exchange program.

The third option provides for the exchange of staff between Forum member institutions and the Secretariat and national institutions outside the Asia Pacific region. For example, an exchange program could be developed between institutions in the Asia Pacific region and institutions in the South American region. The same project design and administrative arrangements with UNV would apply.

The above proposals have many benefits for those members of the Forum who wish to participate. In particular, the costs associated with the program will be borne by UNV while the design of the projects will remain with individual Forum member institutions and the Secretariat. Thus the specific needs of each Forum member can be met through specially tailored projects.

The Secretariat therefore recommends that Forum members approve the following:

- *That the host institution for the 4th Annual Meeting, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, or the Regional Coordinator of the Forum, sign the letter of intent on behalf of the Forum*
- *That the Secretariat be instructed to work with individual Forum members, UNV and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in development of specific proposals*

LETTER OF INTENT

THE UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ASIA PACIFIC FORUM OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

The United Nations Volunteers programme (hereinafter referred to as “UNV”) was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1970 to serve as the volunteer arm of the UN system. UNV, which is administered as part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is one of the foremost suppliers of experienced professional personnel in support of the initiatives of governments, non-governmental and community-based organisations, and of the UN system itself. UNV is able to provide a unique contribution to national human rights institutions due to its neutrality and impartiality inherent in the United Nations System combined with its ability to strengthen decentralized structures in their outreach capacity.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (hereinafter referred to as “the OHCHR”) is the United Nations body mandated with the responsibility for the co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations agencies in the protection and promotion of human rights as recommended by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) and endorsed by the General Assembly (Resolution 48/141). UNV and the OHCHR have signed a Framework Agreement on 07, April 1995 formalising UNV’s contribution to human rights protection and promotion.

The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (hereinafter referred to as “the APF”) was founded in 1996. The APF provides practical assistance to: (i) strengthen the capacities of its member institutions, (ii) assist governments in the establishment of new institutions and (iii) promote regional human rights co-operation. A precondition of membership to the APF is compliance with United Nations General Assembly endorsed Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions (more commonly referred to as the Paris Principles-CHR Resolution 1992/54, UNGA resolution 48/134). The OHCHR co-operates with and supports the work of the APF in accordance with the Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1999/62, that commended the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for the priority accorded to the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions and called upon the OHCHR to strengthen its co-ordinating role in this field. The OHCHR and the APF have also formalised their relationship through a MOU.

This Letter of Intent reflects the institutional framework and arrangements for collaboration among the three parties, namely UNV, the OHCHR and the APF.

AREAS OF COOPERATION

1. NATIONAL:

UNV, through its International Specialist, National Specialist and Field Worker contractual modalities, shall, on a case by case basis, facilitate the strengthening of national human rights institutions in their out-reach programs. Through this modality, UNV shall contribute to meeting the original objective of the APF of increasing the effectiveness of existing national human rights institutions within the region. Within this context of in-country technical support the responsibilities shall be as follows:

- 1.1. UNV shall be responsible for the recruitment, contracting and administrative backstopping of International Volunteers. The UN Volunteers, so recruited, shall for the duration of their assignment be subject to the Rules of Conduct and Conditions of Service for International UN Volunteers;
- 1.2. UNV shall be responsible for the recruitment, contracting and administrative backstopping of National Volunteers-both Specialists and Field Workers. The UN Volunteers, so recruited, shall for the duration of their assignment be subject to the Rules of Conduct and Conditions of Service for National UN Volunteers;
- 1.3. The APF shall be responsible for identifying appropriate national commissions to be supported and designing, in conjunction with the respective National Commission and UNV, the most appropriate project(s) of support required. The APF shall support the National Commissions in the selection of candidates and provide the technical backstopping required;
- 1.4. The OHCHR shall provide the substantive framework and, on a case-by-case basis, contribute to the design of the project(s).

2. INTRA-REGIONAL:

UNV, through its International Specialist contractual modality, shall facilitate the exchange of experiences and cross-fertilization which was identified by the APF as a priority at its 3rd Annual Meeting held in Jakarta, 7-9 September, 1998, and co-sponsored by the OHCHR. Within this context of intra-regional technical co-operation among the various Forum Member national human rights institutions, the APF Secretariat and the OHCHR in support of establishing new national human rights institutions and the promotion of regional human rights cooperation, the responsibilities shall be as follows:

- 2.1. UNV shall be responsible for the recruitment, contracting and administrative backstopping of International Volunteers. The UN Volunteers, so recruited, shall for the duration of their assignment be subject to the Rules of Conduct and Conditions of Service for International UN Volunteers;
- 2.2. The APF and the OHCHR shall identify and develop the technical cooperation exchange program and jointly with UNV identify candidates. The APF and the OHCHR shall also provide the technical backstopping and training required within the program;
- 2.3. The OHCHR shall provide the coordinating and substantive framework within which this support will occur.

3. INTER-REGIONAL:

UNV, through its International Specialist contractual modality, shall facilitate the exchange of experiences and cross-fertilization with national human rights institutions in other

regions. Within this context of inter-regional technical co-operation between the APF and national human rights institutions of other regions, the responsibilities shall be as follows:

- 3.1. UNV shall be responsible for the recruitment, contracting and administrative backstopping of International Volunteers. The UN Volunteers, so recruited, shall for the duration of their assignment be subject to the Rules of Conduct and Conditions of Service for International UN Volunteers;
 - 3.2. The APF shall identify and participate, together with the potential partner(s) and UNV and under the guidance of the OHCHR, in developing the technical cooperation exchange program. The APF shall also participate with UNV in the identification of candidates and shall contribute to the technical backstopping and training required within the program;
 - 3.3. The OHCHR shall assume responsibility for overall coordination and programming guidance, participate in the selection of candidates and provide the substantive technical backstopping.
4. For any joint program development - intra-regional, national or inter-regional - the APF, the OHCHR and UNV shall, on a case-by-case basis, determine the respective roles of the three organizations and the funding strategy to be pursued.
 5. In the case of implementation of any component of this Letter of Intent, mandatory reviews and evaluations shall be collectively determined by the three organizations on a case-by-case basis.
 6. The provisions of this Letter of Intent may be amended at any time upon the written agreement of all (three) parties.

This Letter of Intent shall enter into force upon signature by all parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being duly authorised thereto, have signed the present Letter of Intent in three copies.

Sharon Capeling-Alakija
Executive Coordinator
United Nations Volunteers

Date

Mary Robinson
High Commissioner
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Date

Aurora P Navarette-Recina

Chairperson
Philippine Human Rights Commission
on behalf of the
**Asia Pacific Forum of National
Human Rights Institutions**

Date



About UNV

August 1999 Update

What is UNV?

The **United Nations Volunteers programme** (UNV) was created by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1970 to serve as an operational partner in development cooperation at the request of UN member states. It is unique within the UN family and as an international volunteer undertaking. It reports to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and works through UNDP's country offices around the world.

Who are the UN Volunteers?

There are about 4,000 qualified, experienced and motivated women and men of over 140 nationalities annually serving in developing countries as volunteer specialists and field workers. Since 1971, roughly 19,000 UN Volunteers from some 150 developing and industrialised nations – 70 and 30 per cent respectively in 1998 – have worked in an equal number of countries.

[Volunteer Statistics](#)

What do they do?

They work in technical, economic and social fields, under four main headings: in technical cooperation with skills-short governments; with community-based initiatives for self-reliance; in humanitarian relief and rehabilitation; and in support of Human Rights, electoral and peace-building processes. They are professionals who work on a peer basis. They listen and discuss; "teach and train"; encourage and facilitate. Volunteers also share and exchange ideas, skills and experience.

In what sectors do they work?

The UNV programme involves a wide spread of sectors: it maintains a roster covering some 108 professional categories. Agriculture, health and education feature prominently, as do social conditions, community development, vocational training, industry, transport and population. As of spring 1998, humanitarian relief and rehabilitation, together with electoral and peace-building work, accounted for more than 30 per cent of assignments.

Where are they working?

Over the years, they have served in about 140 countries. Today 45 per cent are at work in Africa, 25 per cent in Asia and the Pacific; the remainder are to be found in the Arab States, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and with newer programmes in Central and Eastern Europe. More than 50 per cent serve in the world's poorest nations - the least developed.

Half work outside capital cities, frequently in remote towns and villages. This is in response to expressed needs, and it reflects the commitment which volunteers bring. Included here are the field workers serving at grassroots level within UNV's Participatory Development (or "DDS" - Domestic Development Service) Programmes in Asia/Pacific and Africa. These are practitioners with excellent track-records in village-level community animation; they exchange skills and knowledge among countries of those regions.

How does the programme operate?

It works in partnership with governments, UN Agencies, development banks and non-governmental and community-based organizations. The programmes within which UNV specialists serve are usually managed by governments; often there is technical input and supervision from one of the UN system Specialized Agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organization, the World Food Programme, UNESCO, the UN High Commission for Refugees, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, or from the World Bank. At the request of some governments UNV itself acts as executing agent.

How is it funded?

Part of UNV's resources come from country and regional funds provided by its parent body, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Other significant sources include the regular programme budgets of UN agencies, contributions from host governments, special purpose grants by donor governments, and the UNV Special Voluntary Fund. Contributions to UNV's General and [Special Voluntary Funds](#) reach some \$16 million annually.

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