



**OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS**



**Effective implementation of international instruments on  
human rights, including reporting obligations under  
international instruments on human rights**

**Commission on Human Rights Resolution: 2004/78**

*The Commission on Human Rights,*

*Reaffirming* that the full and effective implementation of United Nations human rights instruments is of major importance to the efforts of the United Nations to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and that the effective functioning of human rights treaty bodies is indispensable for the full and effective implementation of such instruments,

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 57/202 of 18 December 2002 and its own resolution 2002/85 of 26 April 2002 and all previous resolutions on the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights,

*Takes note with appreciation of:*

(a) The report of the Secretary-General entitled “Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change” (A/57/387 and Corr.1) and his report on the status of implementation of actions described therein (A/58/351), and recalling General Assembly resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, which calls for, inter alia, a more coordinated approach by human rights treaty bodies and standardized reporting requirements,

(b) The note by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.4/2004/98), submitted pursuant to Commission resolution 2002/85,

(c) The report of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies on their fifteenth meeting, held in June 2003 (A/58/350) and the report of the second inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies (ibid., annex I),

(d) The report of the brainstorming meeting on reform of the human rights treaty body system, held in Malbun, Liechtenstein, in May 2003 (A/58/123, annex),

1. *Welcomes* the measures taken by the human rights treaty bodies to improve their functioning, as reflected in their annual reports, the report of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies and the report of the inter-committee meeting;

2. *Encourages* the continuing efforts by the human rights treaty bodies and the Secretary-General aimed at improving the effectiveness of the treaty body system with a view to a more coordinated approach to its activities and standardized reporting, including by streamlining, rationalizing, rendering more transparent and otherwise improving working methods and reporting procedures;

3. *Notes with appreciation* the recent efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner to strengthen the United Nations treaty body system inter alia through thematic

workshops, including at the regional level, technical assistance, the creation of the Treaty Implementation Unit and the Petitions Unit, and the pooling of substantive and administrative support;

4. *Encourages* all key stakeholders, such as the Secretary-General, the Office of the High Commissioner in particular, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the treaty bodies and States parties, to continue to examine ways of improving the effectiveness of the treaty body system, including by:

(a) Reducing the duplication of reporting required under the different instruments as well as the reporting burden on States parties, including through the use of an expanded core document, without impairing the quality of reporting, and focused periodic reports based on the concluding observations;

(b) Providing preliminary lists of issues to States in advance of consideration of reports by treaty bodies;

(c) Harmonizing the general guidelines regarding the form and content of reports across all treaty bodies;

(d) Coordinating the reporting schedule for the consideration of reports;

(e) Limiting the length of States parties' reports;

(f) Establishing consistent methods of work for the treaty bodies;

5. *Recalls* relevant provisions of the human rights treaties providing for individual complaints and stresses the important role of the treaty bodies in furthering the implementation of the human rights treaties by examining individual complaints under the various complaints procedures relating to States that have accepted them, and encourages all treaty bodies dealing with individual complaints to consider further ways of improving their working methods in this regard;

6. *Welcomes* the holding of inter-committee meetings of the human rights treaty bodies to discuss issues of common concern, including issues relating to the methods of work of the treaty bodies, and encourages those bodies to continue this practice in future on an annual basis;

7. *Welcomes also* the holding of regular meetings with States and encourages the treaty bodies to continue this practice in future on an annual basis;

8. *Acknowledges* the important contribution of the treaty bodies towards furthering the interpretation of the rights contained in the human rights treaties and, in this regard, takes note of the practice of elaborating general comments;

9. *Urges* States parties to contribute, individually and collectively, such as through meetings of States parties, to identifying practical proposals and ideas for improving the functioning of the treaty bodies, encourages those that are already doing so to continue their efforts, and strongly encourages the treaty bodies to take these efforts into consideration in their ongoing work;

10. *Welcomes* the availability of documentation regarding the treaty bodies on the

web sites of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Division for the Advancement of Women and the electronic distribution of concluding observations, general comments and views issued by the treaty bodies and encourages them to continue to enhance their use of information technology at all stages of the reporting process with a view to strengthening the treaty body system and making more efficient use of existing resources, including through harmonizing the treaty body web sites and providing the option to States of receiving electronic copies of documentation rather than hard copies;

11. *Welcomes* the contribution to the work of the human rights treaty bodies made by the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies and encourages the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies, the various organs of the Commission, including its special procedures, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, the Office of the High Commissioner and the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies to continue to explore specific measures to intensify this cooperation among themselves and improve communication and information flow to improve further the quality of their work, including by avoiding unnecessary duplication;

12. *Affirms* the importance of concrete and practical concluding observations addressed to States parties and encourages the efforts of human rights treaty bodies to provide them;

13. *Welcomes* new initiatives by human rights treaty bodies actively to follow up concluding observations and comments with States parties, including through the appointment of one of their members as rapporteur for follow-up, and encourages all human rights treaty bodies to consider enhancing emphasis on implementation and follow-up;

14. *Encourages* the efforts made by human rights treaty bodies to consider the situations of some States parties whose reports are overdue and the suggestions of the inter-committee meeting for harmonizing these efforts;

15. *Recognizes* the important role played by non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions in all parts of the world in the effective implementation of all human rights instruments and encourages the inter-committee meeting to consider the development of harmonized working methods for the exchange of information between the human rights treaty bodies and such organizations;

16. *Encourages* the efforts of the treaty bodies to monitor more effectively the human rights of women in their activities and reaffirms that it is the responsibility of all treaty bodies to integrate a gender perspective throughout their work;

17. *Urges* States parties to make every effort to meet their reporting obligations under United Nations human rights instruments, in particular those with overdue reports;

18. *Also urges* States parties that have not already done so to make every effort to submit their initial report, as called for by the United Nations human rights instruments;

19. *Urges* each State party whose report has been examined by a human rights treaty body to provide effective follow-up to the observations of the treaty body;

20. *Also urges* each State party whose report has been examined by a human rights treaty body to disseminate effectively in its territory the full text of the concluding observations of the treaty body on its report;

21. *Urges* States that have been subject to individual complaints to consider carefully the views of the treaty bodies and to provide adequate follow-up to those views;

22. *Reiterates* that a priority of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Division for the Advancement of Women should be to provide assistance to States parties, upon their request and, if possible, in coordination with other United Nations bodies, Governments and other interested parties, in order:

(a) To assist those States in the process of ratifying United Nations human rights instruments;

(b) To assist States with the implementation of their obligations under such instruments, including the preparation of their core documents and initial reports;

(c) To assist States in following up on concluding observations;

23. *Invites* States parties that have not yet submitted their core documents or initial reports under United Nations human rights instruments to avail themselves, where necessary, of technical assistance for this purpose;

24. *Encourages* the human rights treaty bodies to continue to identify specific possibilities for technical assistance, to be provided at the request of the State concerned, in the regular course of their work of reviewing the periodic reports of States parties, and encourages States parties to consider carefully the concluding observations of the treaty bodies in identifying their needs for technical assistance;

25. *Emphasizes* the need to ensure financing and adequate staff and information resources for the operations of the human rights treaty bodies, in particular in view of the additional demands placed on the system by the creation of a new treaty body, new reporting requirements, the increasing number of ratifications and enhanced reporting by States and, with this in mind:

(a) Welcomes the additional resources committed to the Office of the High Commissioner for the Treaty Implementation Unit and the Petitions Unit which strengthen its ability to support the treaty bodies effectively;

(b) Reiterates its request that the Secretary-General provide adequate resources in respect of each treaty body, while making the most efficient use of existing resources, in order to give the human rights treaty bodies adequate administrative support and better access to technical expertise and relevant information;

(c) Calls upon the Secretary-General to seek in the next biennium the resources within the United Nations regular budget necessary to give the human rights treaty bodies adequate administrative support and better access to technical expertise and relevant information;

(d) Welcomes the programme prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to enhance the resources available to all the human rights treaty bodies and thereby strengthen the implementation of these human rights treaties, and encourages all Governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and interested persons to consider contributing to the appeal for extrabudgetary resources for the treaty bodies made by the High Commissioner until the regular budget

funding meets their needs;

26. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Commission at its sixty-second session on measures taken to implement the present resolution and on obstacles to its implementation, including the efforts of the treaty bodies to integrate a gender perspective throughout their work;

27. *Decides* to consider this question at its sixty-second session under the same agenda item.

*58th meeting*

*21 April 2004*

[Adopted without a vote. See chap. XVIII. - E/2004/23 – E/CN.4/2004/127]