

Glion Human Rights Dialogue 2024 (Glion X)

Transforming universal norms into local reality – NMIRFs and the strengthening of the UN human rights system’s effectiveness and on-the-ground impact

Policy Dialogues on: ‘Key characteristics and good practices in the establishment and development of NMIRFs’

Summary report

Ahead of the 10th Glion Human Rights Dialogue, to be hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco in Marrakesh in October 2024, two pre-Glion policy dialogues were held to look at the ‘Key characteristics and good practices in the establishment and development of NMIRFs.’ The first, hosted by Paraguay and Portugal, was held on 23 April, and the second, hosted by the Marshall Islands, The Gambia, and the Commonwealth Small States Office, was held on 10 June.

The primary objective of these dialogues was to identify, through the exchange of experiences and good practices, the key ‘success factors’ of an effective NMIRF, with a view to identifying common characteristics, and thus improving human rights implementation and reporting. Over the two meetings, participants shared experiences, good practices, and ideas relating to: legal basis, terms of reference, mandate, organisational structure, working methods, secretariat, budget, and composition, as well as their engagement with other stakeholders, their use of IT systems and data management software, and their strategies for integrated approaches to human rights and the SDGs.

The meeting was held under the Chatham House rule.

Opening sessions

An Ambassador explained that the aim of the two pre-Glion dialogues was to explore the key dimensions and characteristics of an effective national mechanism for implementation, reporting, and follow-up (for UN human rights recommendations) (NMIRFs).

This would be done through an open exchange of experiences and good practices, drawing upon national experiences and emerging trends from around the world.

‘It is important at the outset,’ he said, ‘to recognise the increasingly critical role NMIRFs play in our societies). They serve as vital conduits for the implementation of UN human rights recommendations at the national level. Whether through the enactment of new legislation, the refinement of existing policies, or the enhancement of practices, NMIRFs are instrumental in translating international human rights standards into tangible improvements in the lives of individuals.’

‘Our overarching objective,’ across the two dialogues, he said, ‘is to discern the ‘success factors’ that underpin effective NMIRFs. By identifying and understanding these critical elements, we can strive towards enhancing the efficacy of such mechanisms and thereby fortifying the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide.’

Another Ambassador expressed his country’s ‘unequivocal commitment’ to the further development of NMIRFs, based on its own positive experience. Since it was established in 2010, that NMIRF has played an effective role in strengthening implementation coordination across government, and in bringing the country’s reporting obligations fully up to date. ‘It is an interministerial coordination body where over 20 government entities represented, as well as three observers (Parliament, Public Prosecutor’s Office, and Ombudsperson). The NMIRF also convenes plenary meetings with civil society representatives.’

Another speaker, from civil society, reminded colleagues that the construction of NMIRFs is still a relatively new agenda. The idea of a single national mechanism to coordinate the implementation of, and reporting on, recommendations from all the UN human rights mechanisms, and do so across the branches of government, was first discussed at Glion IV, only six years ago. The basis of that discussion was emerging good practice in just a few countries. NMIRFs are now a priority agenda item at the Human Rights Council, and amongst UN agencies. The Universal Rights Group’s (URG’s) recent global mapping of NMIRFs shows that at least 45 States have now established effective NMIRFs. A group of friends on NMIRFs was also established around five years ago by Portugal and URG, he noted. Moreover, a few years ago, Pacific Island States adopted a first-ever set of principles to guide the establishment and development of NMIRFs, while earlier this year, Paraguay, Portugal, and Morocco established an international network of NMIRFs. ‘Much has therefore been achieved in a short space of time,’ he said.

The speaker ended with a simple message: ‘all the recent research undertaken by URG with various UN agencies, on the domestic implementation of UN human rights recommendations, shows without a doubt that the presence of a NMIRF provides a significant boost to implementation, and helps States clear reporting backlogs.’

Another speaker presented the growing work of the Commonwealth to help members, especially LDCs and SIDS, establish effective NMIRFs. ‘In 2022,’ he noted, ‘we conducted a survey on NMIRFs among Commonwealth members, alongside URG.’ That provided a baseline. The Commonwealth has also organised a series of regional seminars on establishing and maintaining a NMIRF, and has provided capacity-building support to a range of member States. One key lesson is there is no one size fits all – NMIRFs need to be established based on local contexts. However, there are clear good practices that serve to maximise effectiveness, and that explains the importance of this Glion Dialogue – to distil those good practices into some kind of universal guidance framework. States likewise face similar challenges in establishing and maintaining an effective NMIRF, and collating and understanding those challenges, especially for Small States, is, he said, a key goal of this preparatory policy dialogue.

Key characteristics, good practices, and challenges: legal basis/terms of reference/mandate, organisational structure, and working methods (e.g., regularity of meetings, focal points, clustering)

A first speaker, a diplomat representing a LDC in Africa, explained that her country is in the process of establishing an effective NMIRF. For the moment, the national implementation and reporting system is **not a ‘legally established structure,’** but is rather an *ad hoc* inter-ministerial task force. In terms of organisational structure, she explained that the Ministry of Justice is responsible for coordinating implementation and reporting for six of the core UN human rights treaties, and the Ministry of Gender supervises the remaining three. In practice, the system is mainly focused on reporting, rather than implementation.

Although it is not yet a fully functioning NMIRF, the current system still marks an improvement on the situation before 2017. At this time, UN agencies usually had to remind the Government that a report was due, and would provide a consultant to do the work for the Government, while there was little or no focus on implementation. There was therefore little coordination or ownership across government. This changed in 2017, with support from OHCHR, and a team of lawyers was established in the Ministry of Justice, to better coordinate implementation and

reporting. At the same time, the ad hoc inter-ministerial task force was created, with focal points across relevant line ministries.

The construction of a NMIRF will further institutionalise this system, she said. That will include adopting a formal legal basis of the mechanism, providing a clear mandate and terms of reference, and clarifying the organisational structure and methods of work. A key challenge for the Government, she explained, is the retention of human rights focal points in line ministries – there tends to be a high staff turnover, and their commitment to regularly participate in meetings. It is hoped that a formal legal basis, especially if adopted by the President or Parliament, will give the NMIRF sufficient legal and political weight, and thus help overcome these challenges.

A representative of another African LDC then spoke to present her country's case study. She explained that, previously, the Foreign Ministry convened *ad hoc* meetings with relevant line ministries, solely to compile reports (i.e., not implement recommendations). 'This model was ineffective,' she said, 'as government officials were not really interested in the process.'

To overcome these challenges, the Government established a more formal mechanism with a **clear legal basis**. That legal basis and mandate clarified which ministries should be involved, and made clear the State's expectations of them. The Ministry of Justice chairs the mechanism, which, according to the terms of reference, should meet monthly.

'Despite these efforts, challenges persist. For instance, resource constraints are a significant issue. Staff turnover means that experts from one ministry might be promoted or leave, resulting in a loss of continuity and expertise. Additionally, there is often a lack of political will and understanding of the importance of these reporting obligations within government departments.' 'Another issue,' she explained, 'is the reluctance of ministries to share information. They often don't see the need to provide data, fearing it might expose the country negatively.'

Another African diplomat then presented his country's situation and challenges. Their national mechanism is based upon a 'community committee for human rights.' This is responsible for reporting to the UN mechanisms, he said, but also for monitoring progress with the implementation of recommendations, and measuring human rights progress. 'The mechanism has a specific focus on marginalised groups,' he said. It is also required to report regularly to Parliament, significantly improving oversight and encouraging deeper progress.

‘We encourage other States to follow this model,’ he said. ‘In our case, the NMIRF has had a significant positive impact on reporting, but also on implementation. For example, human rights recommendations are now more regularly integrated into government development plans, laws, and policies.’

The mechanism is **situated in the President’s Office**, he explained, ‘giving it high-level political weight,’ and ensuring that all line ministries are clear as to their roles and responsibilities in fulfilling the State’s human rights obligations.

The committee is serviced by senior government officials, acting as a kind of secretariat, in the President’s Office. In addition to organising meetings, and coordinating follow-up, the team also manages staff mobility (if one focal point in a ministry leaves, for example, they ensure that a replacement is ready). The team also calls for inputs from ministries for the preparation of periodic reports to the UN.

In addition to the community committee, the State has also established an interdepartmental committee at more technical level, which prepares annual human rights workplans, and prepares draft periodic reports. Reports are submitted to the Cabinet for approval before being submitted to the UN.

Importantly, the country’s national mechanism also ensures that all UN mechanism reports and recommendations are shared with all relevant parts of government (including all relevant ministries and the Parliament), and with the public. ‘The monitoring and evaluation department in the President’s Office, along with the Parliament, plays a crucial role in ensuring compliance and implementation.’

Next, a representative of a Caribbean Small Island State shared her country’s experience. She recognised many of the challenges described by previous speakers. ‘Starting with the **legal basis, terms of reference, and mandate,**’ the speaker confirmed that the mandate of her country’s inter-ministerial committee (IMCHR) was adopted by the Cabinet (in June 2018).

Previously, the government had established a UPR-ICCPR steering committee. However, the government realised that they needed to cover all UN human rights treaties and mechanisms, not just these two, and that the recommendations from the different mechanisms were interrelated. Hence the shift to a more recognisable NMIRF (the IMCHR).

Regarding organisational structure and composition, she explained that the IMCHR includes ‘the Attorney General's chambers, the Bureau of Gender Affairs, the Child Protection and Family Services Agency, the Department of Personnel Services, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, the Jamaica Defence Force, the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities, and several ministries, including those responsible for culture, gender, education, health, justice, labour, national security, and more. The Office of the Children's Advocate, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Planning Institute of Jamaica are also part of this structure.’

One unexpected challenge caused by the ‘institutionalisation’ of the NMIRF (i.e., establishing by law, with set terms of reference, including composition) is that it creates some inflexibility. For example, her country's NMIRF has recently been exploring the possibility of including direct representation from the judiciary and the national statistics office in the NMIRF. However, this is being delayed because it would require the Cabinet to approve changes to the mandate and terms of reference of the mechanism.

The committee is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade or their designated representative, often the Director of the International Organisations Department. Despite the committee being chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice holds national responsibility for human rights – ‘this twin role can be tricky but is instrumental.’

‘Like other developing countries, we also face human resource challenges, and, yes, sometimes political will.’ Regular NMIRF meetings are held quarterly, with the possibility of special sessions when the need arises – for example, to finalise a periodic report, or to discuss new recommendations.

Civil society involvement is Cabinet-mandated, with periodic engagements stipulated in the terms of reference. These engagements are held three times annually, with NGOs invited based on the subject matter under discussion.

The **floor was then opened** for questions and comments.

One participant spoke of the challenges facing large, diverse, highly populated countries like India. India has 1.4 billion people and 22 official languages, he noted. ‘Each state has its own official language, and for example, in Tamil Nadu, district magistrates must write in Tamil. The

difference between Tamil and Hindi is as vast as between Japanese and French. This presents a significant challenge for both implementation and reporting.'

Another challenge is the country's federal structure. 'Many critical issues, such as women's and children's rights, must be implemented by state governments, even if the central government initiates the policy.'

'Linked with these points about the size and diversity of the country, resource constraints necessarily present a challenge to implementation and inclusive reporting.'

He also urged other States and the UN mechanisms to understand that implementation cannot happen overnight, especially in poorer countries. To do it properly takes time, for example in order to educate a part of the population or gradually shift mindsets. It does not work for outside actors, especially from different development contexts, to come and say: 'you should do this or you should do that.' What works is for the whole of the Indian population to be consulted or involved in reporting, for example, and thus able to make proposals for new policies or laws. When these come back as UN recommendations, it is much easier to implement.

He also, like others, spoke of ensuring that terms of reference for NMIRFs emphasise the importance of engaging stakeholders at state and local levels – this is where most of implementation happens.

He noted that, following India's fourth UPR review last year, the State has begun to strengthen its implementation and reporting system – moving in the direction of a NMIRF. The country has now established an inter-ministerial mechanism, co-chaired by senior civil servants from the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The mechanism includes the participation of 15 to 16 government departments. Like many countries, India faces challenges in terms of data collection, which may be helped by formally involving the statistics office.

Another participant from Latin America presented information on her country's NMIRF - an inter-institutional commission of human rights, created by presidential decree, and with the secretariat housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This commission is composed of 34 members from across government. There are ongoing moves to involve the Ministry of Justice more centrally in the NMIRF. She also recognised that the lack of systematic involvement of the parliament is a challenge, as 'many recommendations require legislation in order to be implemented.'

With support from Paraguay, her country is also installing recommendation tracking software to aid coordination.

An African State explained that their NMIRF was established by an 'establishment warrant' from the Office of the President and Cabinet. This warrant details the mandate, which is primarily to coordinate Malawi's periodic reporting on human rights.

An African diplomatic representative asked whether it is best to establish NMIRFs as standalone entities or within existing ministries? 'This question has always caused deadlock in my country.'

Key characteristics, good practices, and challenges: chairing, secretariat, and budget

An African diplomat explained that their NMIRF is coordinated and **chaired** by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Director of Human Rights), and the Attorney-General's Office. The establishing mandate places the **secretariat** of the mechanism in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (under a Deputy Director), though the budget falls under the Ministry of Justice.

'Our mechanism handles the full cycle of reporting: gathering information, drafting reports, submitting them, and following-up on recommendations. We coordinate with other ministries to ensure recommendations are implemented.'

The work of the mechanism is organised by mechanism and treaty – e.g., a task force will be created to follow-up on Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendations. 'These task forces include members from various government departments, agencies, and civil society. It's mandatory to have civil society members involved.'

'One challenge we face is determining the level of seniority for task force members. Senior officers are often unavailable, while junior officers are more available but lack decision-making authority.' Staff turnover is another significant issue, he said. 'We have to train new members. Security agencies, especially the police, frequently transfer officers, complicating continuity.'

'Budget constraints are also a constant challenge. Although we have a budget for drafting and consultations, funding travel for reviews in Geneva is often problematic.' There is also the challenge of integrating human rights perspectives into the work of ministries that do not traditionally consider them, such as health ministries. 'Reliance on donor support, like UNDP or

UN Women, brings its own set of challenges, including potential influence on the report's direction.'

Another African diplomat explained that his country has developed 'a national reporting mechanism document outlining how our reporting obligations should be handled. Before this, we relied on an inter-ministerial committee (IMC) to handle our obligations, but it was not effective.' This new document aims to provide a clear framework for our reporting obligations.

The **secretariat of the mechanism** is stationed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Various ministries, departments, and agencies provide their input to the secretariat. The **budget** also sits with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A Pacific Island State representative said that their NMIRF is co-chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. Other relevant ministries (human rights focal points) are invited depending on the human rights issue under discussion. The secretariat, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, maintains a 'living' roster of focal points. For each focal point, there is a substitute, in case the focal point is unavailable, or to 'move up' should the lead focal point move on. This helps with continuity and institutional memory.

Key characteristics, good practices, and challenges: composition, and other stakeholder engagement

A first panellist spoke about the **composition** of her country's NMIRF. She explained that all relevant government ministries, State agencies, and parliament are involved with or engaged by her country's NMIRF. She explained that the NMIRF has developed an information management system to ease coordination (implementation and reporting) between these different entities.

Once the NMIRF has met to agree on steps to implement UN recommendations, that information is integrated into an 'implementation plan,' which includes with ministry or other government entity is responsible, indicators to monitor progress and impact, and an implementation timeline.

The speaker explained another key benefit of establishing a NMIRF, namely that officials and/representatives from all these different government entities change regularly over time, and in this context, the centralised NMIRF has become her country's 'institutional memory, ensuring continuity and permanence in our interactions with our international partners on human rights.'

The NMIRF also plays a key role in training new ministry focal points, and in providing ongoing support with both implementation and reporting.

The broad composition of the NMIRF has, she explained, another benefit: to increase awareness about the States' international human rights obligations and commitments, and increasing their 'commitment, ownership, and involvement in the process of implementing and reporting on those obligations.' This includes parliament as well as the executive. Thanks to the NMIRF, parliament is now a key part of her country's implementation and reporting system. For example, 'all periodic reports are presented to both chambers of Parliament before they are submitted to the UN mechanisms.' The NMIRF has also increased the involvement of civil society (see below section), especially in monitoring progress.

A second speaker, from civil society, discussed best practice in terms of a NMIRF's **outreach to and engagement with other national stakeholders, such as NHRIs and civil society.**

The speaker recognised that this is not a simple issue to address. Civil society is not homogeneous, different actors monitor and help implement different sets of recommendations.

Another issue is that civil society is often seen, including by itself, as focused on monitoring. Yet it can also play a role in supporting implementation, even if this is primarily the role of governments, through exerting pressure, advocacy, inputting policy ideas into periodic reporting, and, especially at the local level and often alongside NHRIs, by being an implementation partner. 'NGOs and NHRI can act as important implementing partners, and their perspectives on formulating and monitoring implementation plans are crucial,' she noted.

The speaker offered the example of Amnesty International, which often works with local offices to follow-up on UPR recommendations. This might be advocacy to press the government to implement, including by assigning adequate budgetary resources, or advocacy to press parliamentarians to amend legislation or set human rights budgets. pass laws and set budgets, are essential. Educating parliamentarians about their country's UPR commitments and integrating these recommendations into their work is vital. The speaker agreed with others that parliamentarians are often insufficiently involved in the work of NMIRFs. 'OHCHR estimates that around 60% of recommendations require legislation to be implemented,' she noted.

She also spoke of civil society's important role in informing and educating the public about UN mechanisms and processes, and about how the implementation of recommendations might

improve their lives. 'We need to bring UN processes and recommendations to the public so that people can engage and understand. That involves civil society organisations, governments, and the media. NGOs can bridge the gap between the public and the government.' She offered the example of Amnesty Mali's live streams of UPR reviews, or short videos produced by Amnesty Mongolia to explain the key issues in an accessible way.

'Implementation often falls under specific government ministries,' she said, 'which poses a challenge for advocacy - effective implementation requires stakeholders to coordinate and work together.' NMIRFs are therefore very important as they provide a single point of reference.

'We've seen good practices in countries like Uruguay, Paraguay, Portugal, and Morocco. The best examples build civil society participation into the heart of the mechanism, allowing engagement with the government at all stages.' 'NMIRFs should ensure engagement from all stakeholders using a bottom-up approach; governments can provide resources for capacity-building, ensure outreach to marginalised communities, and use technology to facilitate participation.'

She argued that breaking down recommendations into thematic areas can help design capacity-building tools. 'The Universal Rights Index categorizes UN recommendations and can be helpful in this regard.'

A third panellist offered the perspective of **NHRIs**. 'Independent human rights institutions are uniquely positioned to monitor the work of NMIRFs and to contribute to and support their mandates,' she said, 'by bringing specific human rights expertise and a wealth of experience to the process.' NHRIs were among the first to recommend the establishment of effective NMIRFs, she noted. 'Alongside other actors, such as civil society organisations and human rights defenders, NHRIs can play a significant role in contributing to the objectives of NMIRFs.'

'As the number and sophistication of NMIRFs continue to grow, it is crucial to have clarity on their distinct roles and responsibilities, as well as the contributions that NHRIs and civil society can make.'

She then highlighted a few areas where NHRIs can contribute during the establishment and to the operation of NMIRFs:

1. Support and evaluation - NHRIs can support NMIRFs in reviewing and evaluating progress in implementing recommendations. This involves providing evidence-based information

on the human rights situation on the ground, and advising on appropriate evaluation and planning processes, such as the development of national implementation plans, data indicator frameworks, and follow-up mechanisms.

2. Building knowledge and expertise - NHRIs can contribute to building knowledge and expertise within government structures. For example, during the drafting of the NMIRF framework in South Korea, NHRIs actively participated with the Ministry of Justice, resulting in a framework that includes provisions for consulting NHRIs and NGOs ahead of reviews.
3. Ensuring meaningful participation - NHRIs can support NMIRFs in ensuring meaningful and inclusive participation of relevant stakeholders throughout their work. They can advise on effective consultation mechanisms and serve as a bridge between NMIRFs and other national bodies, such as parliaments, media, academia, and the wider public, ensuring all voices are heard.
4. Engagement with the UN system - NHRIs engage across the UN system, and link national processes with global mechanisms, such as SDG reviews. This supports a coherent, coordinated human rights-based approach.
5. Accountability - NHRIs bring an important element of accountability to the work of NMIRFs by independently monitoring their work and impact on human rights. They can do this through recommendations to the international system. For example, the Danish Institute (NHRI) has pressed for UPR recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of Denmark's NMIRF.

A final speaker offered good practices and lessons learnt in **UN Country Team (UNCT) and UN agency** engagement with NMIRFs.

‘Since the reforms initiated by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, our mandate has included the strengthening of national protection systems, with NMIRFs being a key part of those systems,’ he began.

In 2016, UN development agencies conducted an assessment to understand the emergence of NMIRFs, revealing significant diversity and versatility. There is no one-size-fits-all. ‘Each State needs a mechanism that makes sense for its unique context.’ Notwithstanding, UN agencies must ensure that basic human rights principles are incorporated into these designs.

‘We must move beyond technocratic approaches to create a more space for open dialogue. While technology plays a crucial role in monitoring recommendations, these processes must not

remain exclusively in the hands of technocrats. The key is using the recommendations effectively, with NMIRFs being the perfect institutions to build national ownership of recommendations.'

The role of UN agencies includes:

1. Strengthening the bridge between normative commitments and operational work, translating norms into policy.
2. Mobilising government entities - for example, UNFPA works with ministries of gender and health, to help ensure they are fully involved.
3. Bringing expertise in human rights-based approaches (HRBA).

'NMIRFs should be privileged actors at the national level, promoting a coordinated response both horizontally and vertically. This means not just involving different ministries but ensuring these efforts trickle down to the community level. For instance, UNFPA works with religious and traditional leaders and parents on issues like FGM, helping NMIRFs overcome community resistance.'

'We must lead by example. We are partnering with the Universal Rights Group (URG) to support the integration of human rights recommendations into our country programs, with workshops planned to advance this agenda.'

During the **open discussion** that followed, a civil society representative spoke of the importance of including local and regional governments in the development and work of NMIRFs. 'There will continue to be a significant implementation gap if these entities are not included,' she argued, 'as they are often the actual implementers, especially of economic, social, and cultural rights.' 'Think about your daily life in Geneva,' she suggested, 'your children's education, your social security, your housing, your water, all these things are provided by local authorities.'

Italy, she said, is a rare example of a country that includes regional and local governance in its NMIRF. 'Central governments are not the only duty bearer.'

The participant also called for greater linkages between human rights and SDG implementation, and for the private sector to be engaged by NMIRFs.

Another civil society representative then asked an important question about how to identify which civil society organisations and local governments should participate in NMIRF activities? This may

be clear for ministries and NHRIs, but NGOs and local governments are a far more diffuse set of actors. 'For instance, in Italy, there are 800 municipalities and 23 regions involved in monitoring human rights recommendations from both UN and regional mechanisms.' He noted that uninvited NGOs might also feel excluded. How should NMIRFs select NGOs and local authorities to participate in its deliberations?

In response, another participant said that for NGOs at least, if each NMIRF meeting would focus on a certain thematic cluster of recommendations, then the most relevant and active NGOs on that issue should be invited.

A diplomat from the Pacific explained that while the Cabinet Directive establishing her country's NMIRF is clear that civil society must be included, the Directive does not name specific organisations. 'Instead, we involve them on an *ad hoc* basis depending on the human rights issues to be discussed.' For example, if the NMIRF will be discussing disability rights recommendations, we invite disability rights NGOs. 'We also now regularly involve and consult with the UN Resident Coordinator,' she explained. 'We found this to be a valid entry point for the UN to be more involved through various agencies, which has really helped with human rights and SDG implementation.'

Finally, a diplomat from Asia raised the important question of how and to what extent to involve the judiciary? Judiciaries should be separate from the executive, to maintain their independence. They should not therefore be fully involved in implementation. But perhaps they should be aware of UN recommendations if they are relevant to the administration of justice?

Key characteristics and good practices: IT systems and data management, and integrated approaches to human rights and the SDGs

An Ambassador explained that her country is increasingly connecting human rights and the SDGs in its national development planning. Yet for the moment, they maintain two different implementing and reporting mechanisms, one for human rights (an 'advisory group'), and one for the 2030 Agenda (an 'intersectoral commission'). This raises the question of whether these two mechanisms should be merged?

She agreed with previous speakers about the importance of 'going local' with implementation and reporting. In her view, 'talking about human rights recommendations together with the SDGs

and targets makes them stronger – especially in terms of local acceptance, understanding, and implementation.’

A panellist from civil society then spoke of the rapidly evolving landscape of **digital tools** to support implementation, reporting, and NMIRFs.

‘In NMIRF terminology, we are focusing on the information management capacity,’ he explained. He noted that digital tools can and do help enormously in helping States build this capacity.

Such tools, including OHCHR’s national recommendations tracking database (NRTD), and IMPACT OSS, based on Samoa’s SADATA software, help improve coordination across government, avoid overlap and duplication of efforts, reduce administrative and time burdens, and avoid disruption caused by staff turnover.

‘These tools track and thematically cluster recommendations, linking specific recommendations to relevant SDGs and targets, identifying responsible government ministries, as well as NHRIs and CSOs for monitoring, and developing follow-up plans. This digitalization marks a human rights data revolution, essential for all NMIRFs.’

These digital tools may be divided into three broad categories:

1. Digital human rights tracking tools (DHRTTs) – specialist tools to monitor the lifecycle of human rights recommendations, track progress (or lack thereof), specify responsible actors/focal points in government, and apply indicators and link with SDG indicators. It is important to differentiate between two types of DHRTTs: those that are open source and public, aiding transparency and State accountability through public scrutiny; and those that are internal, focused only on enhancing the governments’ information management capacity.
2. Human rights measurement tools – which apply indicators and indices to assess human rights conditions quantitatively. This assessment can be thematic or encompass a country’s overall human rights landscape.
3. Human rights databases - these are comprehensive repositories of information, that aggregate a vast array of human rights recommendations, information on State cooperation with the UN human rights system, and international standards.

‘Today, the development and upkeep of DHRTTs are collaborative efforts involving a diverse range of stakeholders. This includes the UN secretariat and UN agencies, such as OHCHR, UNICEF, and UN Women; regional intergovernmental organisations such as the Organization of American States, the Council of Europe, and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights; governmental entities such as NMIRFs; as well as NHRIs and NGOs. The academic world is also increasingly involved, especially in the field of human rights measurement.

‘One forward-looking idea for Marrakech is to revisit the principles delineated for NMIRFs, particularly Article 3.4 of the Pacific Principles, which identifies the most immediate digital needs for NMIRFs’ (see annex).

A representative of OHCHR then introduced the Office’s **national recommendations tracking database (NRTD)**, one of the tools mentioned in the previous presentation.

She explained that tools like NRTD help States, especially developing countries, to manage UN recommendations more easily and efficiently, plan and coordinate implementation progress across government (horizontal) and between different levels of government (vertical), and track progress and impact.

NRTDs can also be used as a central repository of information, such as human rights treaties to which the State is party, drafts of periodic reports, etc. The tool is under a constant process of review and improvement, she said. For example, following a request from a European State, OHCHR is working to integrate coordination with local government authorities. OHCHR is also looking at integrating recommendations from the regional human rights mechanisms.

‘The NRTD also supports consultation capacity,’ she said. ‘States have a place to publish draft reports and conduct online consultations. It also keeps track of all deadlines, including Special Procedures visits.’

Like other speakers, she also emphasised the importance of NRTD’s contribution to continuity and institutional memory, as ‘new members of staff may not be aware of past commitments and past work.’

The speaker explained the artificial intelligence (AI) is now being used to categorise recommendations in the Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI). The idea is to minimise manual tasks and have recommendations clustered effectively. ‘Currently, we are also testing the

possibility of condensing similar recommendations using AI - this helps in reducing the number of recommendations to be managed without changing their substance.'

'We are also working on better aligning human rights recommendations with the SDGs and targets,' she noted. This will ease the integration of human rights recommendations into national development plans and UN country programming.

Lastly, the speaker noted that OHCHR has recently received requests from NHRIs to also use the NRTD – to help keep track of implementation.

There then followed an open discussion with all participants.

A representative of civil society asked about the inclusion in digital tools of UN urgent communications, and also whether judiciaries have access? More broadly, should judiciaries be systematically integrated into NMIRFs?

A similar question was asked with regard to business. To what extent should they be involved? They should be aware of key clusters of recommendations, as they should respect those rights. But they shouldn't be involved in implementation in a stricter sense.

A representative of a UN agency expressed some concern at whether a globally designed digital tool could add to the technocratic nature of implementation to-date. Panellists replied that they did not believe this to be the case.

Annex I

Pacific Principles of Practice on NMIRFs, adopted by Pacific Island States

Article 3.4 - Utilisation of technology

To facilitate the aims and functions of an NMIRF and simplify reporting writing processes tracking software/tools can be used to:

- a. Create a single national database of clustered recommendations that becomes a 'living national human rights action plan' through continuous inputs from line ministries and other implementing actors;
- b. Link human rights obligations to national and international development commitments;
- c. Automate and semi-automate many of the processes required for the effective implementation, tracking, measurement, and reporting including data collection requests, data analysis and visualisation, the generation of periodic reports (to parliament and relevant international mechanisms), identification of implementation/data gaps and elimination of reporting/data collection duplication across all human rights obligations and development commitments;
- d. Enable public tracking of implementation activities and progress in relation to all clusters of recommendations and development commitments;
- e. Expand the space for civil society engagement through a platform that allows data inputs from the full range of implementing actors