

TWENTY EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASIA PACIFIC FORUM OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

20-21 September 2023, New Delhi, India

DELHI DECLARATION

Introduction

We, the members of the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), of India, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Oman, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste, convened during the Twenty Eighth Annual General Meeting and Conference in New Delhi, India, held on 20-21 September, 2023:

Recognize and celebrate 30th anniversary of the ‘Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions’ (the Paris Principles), adopted by General Assembly resolution 48/134 on 20 December 1993, as set of international standards and norms related to NHRIs;

Recognize and celebrate the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by General Assembly resolution A/RES/53/144, and the important role that NHRIs play as both protectors of human rights defenders and as human rights defenders themselves;

Recall and renew our commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), on the 75th anniversary of its adoption by the General Assembly in resolution 217 A (III) on 10 December 1948, as a common standard of human rights for all peoples and all nations;

Note the emerging human rights issues and challenges especially in the area of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Artificial Intelligence, business, healthcare, climate change, natural and human-made disasters and offences taking place across borders;

Reaffirm our commitment to the core values of the UDHR for upholding individual dignity, freedom, equality and justice across diverse cultures, languages, traditions and histories, based on the principles of justice and the rule of law, in both online as well as offline environments;

Recognize the need for collective efforts in strengthening the human rights ecosystem, confronting the violation of human rights and achieving a more inclusive and equitable society;

Recognize the impact of NHRIs across the globe, including the Asia Pacific, in promoting justice and human rights for all;

Welcome the participation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations agencies, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), sub-national human rights institutions, representatives of institutions as observers, international, regional and national civil society organizations and Human Rights Defenders;

Thank the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, for inaugurating the conference and highlighting India's commitment to protect and promote human rights in the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – whole world is one family;

Appreciate and thank the National Human Rights Commission, India for successfully hosting the Twenty-Eighth Annual General Meeting and Biennial Conference in New Delhi, India.

Solemnly adopt the Delhi Declaration and state the following:

Bolstering the Human Rights Ecosystem

1. The year 2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Principles by the UN General Assembly, setting the framework for the establishment of independent and effective NHRIs all around the world. In addition, it is also the 30th anniversary of the establishment of OHCHR and GANHRI.
2. From only a small number of NHRIs worldwide in 1993, the number of NHRIs has grown to 120 today. Over the past 30 years, there have been countless examples of the powerful impact of NHRIs to promote justice and accountability for victims of human rights violations, as well as to contribute to laws, policies and practices that uphold human rights.
3. NHRIs worldwide – including in the Asia Pacific region – came out of a complex context of human rights. In the recent years, the impacts of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of people are visible, and other environmental challenges have emerged. Countries are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. War and conflicts continue. Violence and discrimination persist. In order to meet these challenges, proactive action is required.
4. The establishment of GANHRI and its four regional networks of NHRIs, including the APF, demonstrate the importance of a shared commitment to protect and promote human rights through the establishment and strengthening of NHRIs in consonance with the Paris Principles. We need to draw on this legacy of action and impact as we respond to the current human rights challenges, individually and collectively.

Reinvigorating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

5. On 10 December 2023, we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This milestone document sets out, for the

first time, universal recognition and observance of human rights. The 30 articles underpin universal human rights and provide a global standard.

6. As NHRIs play a crucial role in promoting, protecting and monitoring the effective implementation of international human rights standards and bringing together stakeholders at the national level, NHRIs encourage Governments and other stakeholders to make national pledges under the 'Human Rights 75 Initiative' to bring about concrete changes towards the greater enjoyment of human rights for all.
7. At the regional level, we pledge to support the continued establishment of new NHRIs and strengthening the independence and effectiveness of existing NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles, and further strengthening regional human rights mechanisms through capacity-building, sharing of experiences and good practices.
8. We recognize that global business practices have undergone great transformation leading to the development of new business models, but further reform is needed. We note the issues related to the protection of human rights of informal workforce especially inequality and lack of social security benefits leading to their vulnerability and exploitation. We highlight the need for engaging with businesses to ensure respect for human rights throughout supply chains and support the development of policy instruments that promote responsible and ethical business practices.
9. We note the impacts of the recent developments in Information and Communication Technologies and Artificial Intelligence on human rights. There is a need to ensure responsible development and deployment of digital technology and artificial intelligence to further the goals of inclusive human development and build a just society. To this end, we commit to support the protection of human rights of all, including the most vulnerable.
10. We recall the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its 2030 Agenda by the UN Member States and reaffirm that the goal of a peaceful, inclusive and developed society is interrelated and mutually reinforced by the protection and promotion of rights envisaged in the UDHR and codified by various international instruments. We highlight that the work of NHRIs will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.
11. We resolve to make sustained efforts towards awareness generation, outreach, training, advocacy and mutual cooperation to secure human rights to all.

Climate Change and Human Rights

12. We note that one of the most urgent human rights issues facing communities across the Asia Pacific region is the adverse impact of climate change and environmental harm on lives and livelihoods. Millions of people are at risk from rising sea levels, climate change induced extreme weather events, saltwater intrusions, drought, loss of biodiversity, pollution, land degradation and desertification, disease and other changes caused by a warming planet.

13. Certain industrial activities and operations of businesses result in emissions, pollution and other environmental damage that compromises the health and livelihoods of communities. NHRIs resolve to work for the mitigation of environmental degradation at the local level and deal with the impact of climate change on lives and livelihoods, with a special focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups.
14. As actions of corporates and business operations have an impact on environment and human rights, we resolve to work with and encourage them to play a positive role in promoting and protecting human rights as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
15. Finally, we reaffirm our commitment to advise governments and communities in mitigating, adapting and responding to the human rights impacts of climate change.

Adopted in New Delhi, India on 21 September 2023