



**United Nations**

# **Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

1. The present report<sup>1</sup> describes the activities undertaken by my Office since my last report to the General Assembly in 2008. They were undertaken during and in the aftermath of the celebrations marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which culminated on 10 December 2008. The activities in celebration bore testimony to both the vision and continuing relevance of the Declaration for the United Nations and peoples of the world.

2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains today the most enduring and widely acclaimed statement of human rights. If the celebrations revealed enormous popular enthusiasm for the ideals enshrined in the Declaration, they also provided a reminder of the distance still to be covered before we can proclaim the rights of all truly protected. The efforts of my Office as described in the present report aim at better implementation of these rights. From the fight against racism, to support to the various human rights machinery, development of partnerships at the country level, and strengthened and better utilized thematic expertise, my Office has continued with its implementation of its full mandate as described in General Assembly resolution 48/141.

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<sup>1</sup> The report focuses on the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) since the submission of the report to the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. The report should be read in the context of the High Commissioner's report submitted earlier this year to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/10/29).

## Chapter II

### Durban Review Conference

3. Since day one of my tenure, I have been committed to ensuring a successful Durban Review Conference (the Conference) mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/149. My Office, through its Anti-Discrimination Unit,<sup>2</sup> provided full support to the Preparatory Committee, the intersessional open-ended intergovernmental working group responsible for negotiating the outcome document of the Conference, and the Conference. As Secretary-General of the Conference, I effectively engaged with Member States and actively supported the Chair of the intersessional open-ended intergovernmental working group in the negotiation of the outcome document. I also maintained direct dialogue with Member States to facilitate their participation and cooperation to reach consensus. Throughout these interactions, my goal has been to ensure that the interest of victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance would remain the focus of the process.

4. The successful result of the Conference, held in Geneva from 20 to 24 April 2009, illustrated by the adoption by consensus of the outcome document and the report of the Conference, would not have been possible without the willingness of all stakeholders to find common ground despite divergent approaches.

5. Some key elements of the outcome document include acknowledging that racism exists in all societies and that it is the responsibility of Governments to address it and strengthen a victims-oriented approach in the fight against discrimination, including improved assistance and affirmative action policies; highlighting the specific situation of people of African and Asian descent, Roma and victims of trafficking, in addition to the problems of minorities, migrants and indigenous peoples; empowering civil society with a platform for advocacy; promoting the adoption of national plans and programmes of action against racism; and tackling discrimination with respect to economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political rights.

6. OHCHR endeavoured to ensure the effective participation of over 300 civil society organizations from all regions, in particular grass-roots organizations representing victims, including by covering the travel costs for 59 representatives. OHCHR also encouraged NGOs to organize side-events. The Office issued an Electronic Bulletin and briefings on the outcome document and its implementation. The events enabled many stakeholders to exchange views and share best practices on the key issues of the Durban Review process.

7. OHCHR supported the active engagement of special procedures in contributing to the successful outcome of the Conference. The Chair of the Coordination Committee (Committee) delivered a statement on behalf of all mandate holders, condemning racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, welcoming the progress that has been achieved, and urging the Conference to give due consideration to the many concerns raised by the experts. Several mandate holders also participated in the general debate and are expected to be involved in follow up to the Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> The Anti-Discrimination Unit was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/195.



8. An in-house Task Force was established on 18 May 2009 with the objective of ensuring that the follow up and implementation of the outcome document is integrated in the work of my Office. The Task Force, which concluded its work on 9 July, was mandated to develop an OHCHR workplan on the Conference for follow-up; propose assignment of responsibilities; and estimate its financial implications.

## Chapter III

### Human Rights Council

#### A. Regular and special sessions, including subsidiary mechanisms

9. OHCHR continued its substantive support and guidance to the Human Rights Council, which evolved into a quasi-permanent body, and now meets around 35 weeks per year in various formats. Experience shows that this de facto standing nature has enabled the Council to react more swiftly to human rights emergencies. During the reporting period, the Council held four special sessions regarding human rights situations in several countries, including one which focused on thematic issues, namely the impact of the international economic and financial crises on the realization of human rights. In addition, the Council is addressing an increasingly broad human rights agenda, most recently related to the issue of climate change, which was facilitated through more frequent recourse to flexible formats of discussions, such as panels. The contribution of panellists from various cultural and regional backgrounds allowed for more substantive and focused debates. OHCHR ensured that Member States were kept abreast of developments in the Council and its mechanisms, through briefings and consultations in Geneva and New York.

10. With its institutional architecture in place and first operational experiences, the Council enters the phase of assessment and review of its work. Under paragraph 1 of resolution 60/251, the General Assembly will review before March 2011, the status of the Council. This process may also address unresolved issues regarding the Council's relationship with the General Assembly, while all other matters, including ways to strengthen the working methods of the Council, should be considered in the context of the review by the Council of its work and functioning which it is mandated to undertake under paragraph 16 of resolution 60/251 five years after its establishment, namely by June 2011.

11. The interaction between OHCHR and the Human Rights Council has been strengthened and clarified with a very substantive and rich interactive dialogue at the main session of the Council, as well as increased briefings held by my Office. The Strategic Framework for 2010/2011 was presented to the Council at the June 2008 session and efforts have been made by my Office to impact on substantive discussions in the Council. These efforts will continue over the next year.

12. My Office has equally taken steps to encourage greater engagement by NGOs with the human rights machinery, including the Council. Specifically, OHCHR produced a manual entitled *Working with the UN Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society* aimed at assisting and encouraging civil society's engagement with the United Nations human rights machinery.

#### B. Universal periodic review

13. With the conclusion of the fifth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in May 2009, human rights records of 80 States have been reviewed, bringing us to over the one-third mark for the first universal periodic review cycle.

14. The universal periodic review process was able to shed light on human rights in all corners of the world. All States scheduled for review actively participated in the process and sent representatives, often at ministerial level, to the Working Group in Geneva. The participation of eight representatives was also ensured through the use of the Voluntary Trust Fund. In addition, my Office organized six regional briefings (Africa (2), Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and Latin America) and also provided expert advice on the universal periodic review mechanism through regular meetings with representatives of Permanent Missions and other stakeholders, both in Geneva and New York.

15. The complementarity between the universal periodic review and other existing mechanisms needs to be emphasized. The findings of the human rights treaty bodies and special procedures inspired and guided States in making their recommendations to the States under review. This has overall led to encourage these mechanisms to identify and prioritize more action-oriented recommendations.

16. In addition to the intergovernmental dimension, the valuable role played by NGOs in this process is worth noting. Although not always visible at universal periodic review meetings, NGOs certainly have, and continue to provide an extremely valuable contribution to State reviews. Without them, the process would not be complete.

17. The universal periodic review process was established to remind States of their human rights obligations and to obtain their commitments to fulfil them. Several States that have undergone their review have adopted new policies, programmes and measures aimed at improving the human rights situation in their countries. A number of those measures are presented to and shared with the Human Rights Council at each session. It is critical that States remain engaged in this process and keep moving forward in advancing human rights.

18. The universal periodic review process also offered opportunities to strengthen OHCHR partnerships in the United Nations system. OHCHR hosted an inter-agency network on the universal periodic review, organized consultations, provided regular updates and disseminated an OHCHR information note to resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and other United Nations entities on the universal periodic review. At the country level, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, in liaison with OHCHR field presences, increasingly contributed to all phases of the process, advised States to prepare the national report in a consultative manner, provided inputs to OHCHR-prepared reports, and engaged with national human rights institutions and civil society. Recommendations from the universal periodic review, along with findings of other human rights mechanisms, opened opportunities and provided a good basis for United Nations programming and contributed to common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes.

19. During the next year, the second universal periodic review cycle should begin. This will coincide with the review of the work and the functioning of the Human Rights Council in 2011.

## C. Special procedures

20. Special procedures are an essential part of the United Nations human rights machinery. The mandate review resulted in the extension of all thematic mandates and the creation of a new one on cultural rights in March 2009, bringing the total of special procedures mandates to 39. Many are also now routinely invited to address the General Assembly.

21. Special procedures have gained greater visibility. They submitted over 130 reports (thematic and country) and 19 reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. As a result of an open invitation extended by the President of the Council to special procedures, through their Coordination Committee, arrangements have been made to have mandate holders regularly represented at special sessions.

22. At the eighth special session, on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and at the ninth special session, on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Council adopted resolutions tasking several mandate holders with reports, which were presented at the tenth session in March 2009. At the tenth special session, the Council adopted a resolution inviting thematic special procedures to consider the impact of the global economic and financial crises. The Council is aware that appropriate action must be taken to ensure that additional activities of mandate holders can be undertaken effectively without jeopardizing the regular work of the experts as mandated by the Council and the General Assembly, including by providing necessary resources for such additional work.

23. The holding of substantive thematic panels is becoming another hallmark of the Council. Special procedures, with the support of my Office, are increasingly visibly engaging as experts in these events.

24. Since the establishment of the universal periodic review, positive synergies have been created between this mechanism and the special procedures. Their recommendations and other information have been systematically included in the compilation reports prepared by OHCHR. Several of them were referred to during interactive dialogues with the States under review, and some were included in the reports of the sessions and specifically accepted by the States under review. Chile, Monaco, the Republic of Korea, and Zambia issued standing invitations to special procedures.

25. Special procedures mandate holders are also being supported in their interaction with other mechanisms of the Council. The inaugural Forum on Minority Issues, held in December 2008, was guided by the Independent Expert on minority issues, who reported in March 2009 on a series of thematic recommendations on minorities and the right to education.

26. The Special Rapporteur on Indigenous People participated in the first session of the expert mechanism on the rights of indigenous peoples, in October 2008. As participants of the first Social Forum, held in September 2008, the Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty, the Independent Expert on foreign debt and the Special Rapporteur on the right to food addressed the normative framework for the elimination of poverty and the interplay between foreign debt and poverty and the food crisis. OHCHR also supports mandate holders in contributing

to, or following up on, the thematic work being developed by the Advisory Committee.

27. My Office continued to facilitate the selection process for new mandate holders and their integration, through information sessions, briefings and support for the Committee, which organized orientation sessions. In addition to the 27 new mandate holders in 2008, eight new mandate holders are due to take up their functions in 2009.

28. I consider it important for my Office to support the efforts of the experts, to harmonize working methods, encourage States to implement their obligations to cooperate with special procedures and provide follow up to their recommendations; and provide support to finding common and coordinated approaches to human rights situations. At the same time, OHCHR continues its own efforts to innovate for enhanced coordination and effective use of resources for the special procedures — it could certainly do so even more effectively if its own resource constraints were swiftly addressed.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Human rights treaty bodies**

#### **A. New developments**

29. On 10 December 2008, in its resolution 63/117, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Optional Protocol, which will be opened for signature, ratification and accession at a special signing ceremony in September 2009, allows individual petitions before the Committee.

30. The first session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was convened in February 2009 with the support of OHCHR. The Convention has been described as bringing about a “paradigm shift” in the way the entitlements of persons with disabilities are viewed. The Committee’s work under the innovative provisions of the Convention, as well as its Optional Protocol will guarantee that this paradigm shift is sustained. The Office has also taken the lead, jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in coordinating a joint action plan to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities at the level of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

31. On 1 May, the Secretary-General appointed Marta Santos Pais as his new Special Representative on violence against children. She will chair the Inter-Agency Group on Violence against Children, with the support of my Office.

#### **B. Progress in the harmonization of the working methods of treaty bodies**

32. Human rights treaty bodies have continued to work together to streamline and harmonize their working methods, thereby contributing to their accessibility, visibility and effectiveness. Most treaty bodies request States parties to comply with the guidelines for the common core document, and most have adopted their own treaty-specific reporting guidelines or are well advanced in their formulation. Most treaty bodies adopt lists of issues (based on the report received from the State party) and submit them to the State party for written response in advance to the dialogue with the State party delegation. In addition, procedures have been adopted to encourage more focused and timely State reports, such as has been done by the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment since 2008, when it started to adopt and remit to States parties lists of issues prior to the submission of their reports. The annual meeting of Chairpersons of the human rights Treaty Bodies continues to serve as a forum for discussion of harmonization and streamlining of working methods, while the inter-committee meeting, which now meets twice annually, provides a further opportunity for in-depth consideration of these issues. Both meetings have discussed follow-up to treaty body concluding observations and views adopted on petitions, and treaty bodies are developing follow-up procedures. These procedures have provided a framework to encourage implementation of recommendations between reporting rounds, and thereby to enhance the impact of the treaty body process at the national level. Follow-up procedures have been welcomed by national actors, including

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national human rights institutions and NGOs, and have also been used by United Nations and other intergovernmental entities. United Nations country teams are increasingly participating in the treaty body process, including follow-up.

### **C. Prevention and early warning**

33. Some treaty bodies increasingly take a proactive approach in reacting to situations of gross human rights violations and aiming to prevent such situations from arising or escalating. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in particular has further developed its Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedure in order to address and prevent grave violations of rights enjoyed by different racial or ethnic groups around the world, and to alert to situations or threats of ethnic violence. Over the past year, the Committee has engaged 14 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination under that procedure. At the Durban Review Conference, Member States noted with appreciation the Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedure established by the Committee.

34. Also, for the first time, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment will present its public annual report to the General Assembly, containing its main outcome and challenges. Within the framework of its field-oriented preventive mandate, the Subcommittee undertook a visit to Mexico and Paraguay. Such concrete engagement, in particular through in-country visits to places of detention, and assistance and advice provided to national preventive mechanisms, implies the mobilization of additional adequate financial resources.

## Chapter V

### Work of the Office of the High Commissioner at the country level

#### A. Human rights presences at the country and regional levels

35. With the overarching objective of strengthening human rights promotion and protection at the country level, OHCHR continued to use the various tools at its disposal, including dialogue with all relevant national counterparts, partnerships within the United Nations system and with regional organizations, and support to the United Nations human rights mechanisms. It is through human rights field presences that OHCHR was most directly and efficiently able to conduct cooperation with national counterparts.

36. In July 2009, OHCHR was running and supporting 55 field presences: 11 regional presences,<sup>3</sup> 10 offices at the country level,<sup>4</sup> 17 human rights components in United Nations peace missions,<sup>5</sup> and 17 human rights advisers with United Nations country teams.<sup>6</sup> I am very pleased that following the signature of an agreement in December 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region was inaugurated in Doha,<sup>7</sup> on 27 May 2009, and is now operational. Another very welcome development is the upcoming inauguration of the OHCHR Regional Office for Europe in Brussels in October 2009. The decision of the Government of Nepal to

<sup>3</sup> OHCHR Regional Offices for: Southern Africa (Pretoria); East Africa (Addis Ababa); West Africa (Dakar); South-East Asia (Bangkok); the Pacific (Suva); Middle East (Beirut); Central Asia (Bishkek); Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama City) and the OHCHR Liaison Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago). In addition, there are the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (Yaoundé); the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region (Doha).

<sup>4</sup> Togo, Uganda, Cambodia, Nepal, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico; and two stand-alone presences in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Kosovo.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic, United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Mission in the Sudan, African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, United Nations Mission in Liberia, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, United Nations Political Office for Somalia, United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, United Nations Office for West Africa, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq; United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) (Georgia/Abkhazia) — until the termination of the latter's mandate following the Security Council's decision of 15 June 2009 not to extend UNOMIG beyond 15 June.

<sup>6</sup> The Great Lakes region of Africa (Bujumbura), Guinea, Niger, Kenya, Rwanda; Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka; Ecuador, Nicaragua; Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Georgia (covering the South Caucasus).

<sup>7</sup> The Centre was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/153, which mandates the Centre "to undertake training and documentation activities according to international standards and to support such efforts within the region by Governments, United Nations agencies and programmes, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations".



extend the mandate of the OHCHR country office until June 2010 is very encouraging and will allow continued cooperation in a critical transitional period.

37. Negotiations are ongoing regarding the establishment of the OHCHR Regional Office for North Africa and the renewal of the agreement concerning the OHCHR office in Uganda. I hope that based on constructive discussions with the Government of Cambodia, an agreement on the OHCHR country office in Cambodia will be signed. My Office is also finalizing negotiations with the Government of Mauritania concerning the establishment of a country office.

## **B. Rapid response capacity**

38. The capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner to promptly act on the ground in the face of deteriorating human rights situations has been steadily strengthened since the establishment of a rapid response unit in 2006. During the reporting period, the Rapid Response Unit has supported and contributed to four missions aimed at providing technical advice in the aftermath of crises. In August and September 2008, in the context of the crisis in Georgia/South Ossetia, OHCHR dispatched a human rights adviser in support of the United Nations country team and participated in an inter-agency assessment mission to Tskhinvali. From December 2008 to March 2009, OHCHR deployed a human rights officer to strengthen the capacity of its Regional Office for Southern Africa to deal with the unfolding situation in Zimbabwe. In the wake of the Israeli military operations against Gaza, in January 2009, a rapid response officer was sent to the OHCHR office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and assumed the lead in the inter-agency Protection Cluster. In July 2009, OHCHR deployed a human rights adviser to Honduras, at the request of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, to assist the United Nations country team in responding to the human rights consequences of the political crisis.

39. OHCHR continued to support the implementation of resolutions and decisions of the Human Rights Council. Following the adoption, on 12 January 2009, of resolution S-9/1, the Rapid Response Unit provided initial operational and technical support to the international independent fact-finding mission established by the President of the Council on 3 April 2009 “to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that might have been committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, whether before, during or after”. OHCHR subsequently appointed a secretariat to support the mission in the implementation of its mandate. The independent fact-finding mission will present its report at the twelfth session of the Council.

## **C. National human rights institutions<sup>8</sup>**

40. In the context of strengthening national protection systems, OHCHR continued to provide advice to Member States on the establishment and responsibilities of national human rights institutions, from advising on draft legislation establishing such an institution, to facilitating the selection process or the initial training of new

<sup>8</sup> See A/HRC/10/54 and A/HRC/10/55.

commissioners, setting up computerized databases for the handling of individual complaints or preparing a national institution to seek accreditation with the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions. Through these various forms of support, OHCHR assists national human rights institutions in ensuring their compliance with the Paris Principles and in strengthening their capacity to address core protection issues. During the reporting period, in collaboration with human rights field offices, United Nations partners (the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations), and regional networks of national human rights institutions, OHCHR thus assisted in the establishment or strengthening of national human rights institutions in 41 countries.<sup>9</sup>

41. OHCHR continued to provide secretarial support to meetings of the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the International Coordinating Committee, which, by June 2009, had reviewed and accredited 66 national human rights institutions with A status. Throughout its work in this area, OHCHR has focused on the importance of partnerships among national human rights institutions, NGOs and the United Nations system. It also supported and facilitated the involvement of such institutions with United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review. OHCHR supported action by national human rights institutions worldwide in the context of the celebrations of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in connection with activities aimed at highlighting the legality and decency of conditions of detention. OHCHR also continued the national human rights institution fellowship programme allowing staff from national institutions to share their specific country knowledge while becoming more familiar with the United Nations human rights system.

42. Furthermore, OHCHR completed a survey of national human rights institutions intended to identify priority needs and areas where the United Nations system as a whole can work together to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of such institutions.<sup>10</sup>

#### **D. Cooperation with regional and intergovernmental organizations**

43. Enhanced and stronger cooperation between my Office and regional and intergovernmental organizations, on the basis of complementarity and mutual respect is essential in delivering on the human rights aspirations of all the people.

44. In Africa, cooperation was strengthened with the African Union — in particular the Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights and the Africa Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child — as well as with the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States. Through the OHCHR Regional Office for East Africa, and in line with the United Nations-African Union Ten-year Capacity-Building Programme, OHCHR

<sup>9</sup> Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chile, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Jordan, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Liberia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, the Philippines, Rwanda, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, the Sudan (Southern Sudan), Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Uganda and Uruguay.

<sup>10</sup> The survey is available at [www.nhri.net](http://www.nhri.net).

and the African Union are jointly developing the comprehensive strategy for human rights in Africa. In the Asia-Pacific region, the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia (Bangkok) continued to support the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) efforts to establish a human rights body in accordance with the ASEAN Charter adopted in November 2007. Members of the High-level Panel drafting the terms of reference for the future body participated in a briefing convened by OHCHR in Geneva in April 2009 with experts from other regional human rights systems. In Europe, OHCHR continued to enhance its cooperation with the Council of Europe and its institutions through annual working-level meetings. OHCHR would like to explore the possibility of extending this approach in relation to other regional organizations in Europe, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The increased interest of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is also a positive development and this year, my Office was invited for the first time to deliver a statement at the thirty-sixth session of the OIC Ministerial Meeting in Damascus and is cooperating in the establishment of the OIC independent human rights body.

45. The road map (feuille de route) signed between OHCHR and the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie in 2007 will end this year with thematic activities having been successfully implemented. I expect to renew this cooperation.

46. Following an international workshop on regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights in Geneva, in November 2008, and a report by the Secretary-General (A/HRC/11/3), OHCHR appointed a focal point in order to develop best practices and lessons learned between regional mechanisms and the international human rights system.

## **E. Country missions**

47. I consider my direct engagement with Governments and civil society at the country level as critical to better understand situations, raise specific human rights concerns, and discuss global human rights matters. Since the beginning of my mandate, I thus undertook missions to Germany, Colombia and Haiti, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, South Africa, Ethiopia, Nepal and India, the Netherlands, as well as Sweden in the context of their Presidency of the European Union, and Switzerland as the host country. I also travelled to Qatar to inaugurate the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region. In early 2009, I attended the twelfth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union.

## Chapter VI

### Thematic areas

#### A. Equality and non-discrimination

48. The struggle against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remain key priorities for OHCHR. In addition to the work of the Unit devoted to these issues, much of the work of the Office is directly or indirectly related to equality and discrimination. For example, our work on economic, social and cultural rights, activities on human rights and HIV/AIDS as well as initiatives on minorities and indigenous peoples contain a number of elements that help to combat discrimination.

49. The Durban Review Conference reaffirmed the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and offered OHCHR a new basis to adjust its strategy with a view to enhance its action in the fight against the scourge of racism. The Office continues to extend substantive and organizational support to the mechanisms established in the follow-up to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, namely, the Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Working Group of experts on people of African descent and the Group of independent eminent experts on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The Office also provides support to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards.

50. The demarcation line between freedom of expression and hate speech, especially in relation to religious issues, has recently been the subject of discussion at the international level. In order to contribute to this debate, OHCHR organized an expert meeting in October 2008 to address freedom of expression in the context of advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The seminar brought together over 200 participants to examine complex issues related to the links between articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The content of the rich discussions are included in my report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/10/31/Add.3).

#### B. Development, poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goals

51. The global financial and economic crisis will affect all countries with a serious and disproportionate impact on the poorest. Concerned that these crises are one of the greatest threats for the realization of human rights worldwide, and pursuant to the request from the Human Rights Council, I participated in the General Assembly high-level Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis, held in June 2009. Furthermore, the Office is contributing to the system-wide efforts in this area through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, including through the initiative on a social floor protection while ensuring the mainstreaming of human rights in other initiatives.

52. The Office has paid increased attention to supporting efforts to mainstream human rights into national policies, particularly in the context of country-led

poverty reduction strategies and national Millennium Development Goals, in accordance with the Member States' commitment at the 2005 World Summit.

53. Under the "dialogues for action" initiative, OHCHR, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners, organized two regional dialogues in Johannesburg, South Africa, and in Bangkok, in September and October 2008, respectively, bringing together national actors on development and human rights as well as international and regional partners to share experience on efforts to integrate human rights in regional and national level policies, with a view to identifying the key gaps and actions necessary to further such efforts.

54. In the area of poverty reduction, OHCHR supported the efforts to further elaborate the draft guiding principles on human rights and extreme poverty, originally prepared by the former Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in 2007. As requested by the Human Rights Council, OHCHR organized a round of consultations with Member States and other relevant stakeholders, including the seminar on 27 and 28 January 2009 on the draft guiding principles, which reaffirmed the value of having guiding principles and recommended the Council to mandate the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty to carry out a revision of the draft guiding principles. The outcome of these consultations was reflected in my report to the Council (A/HRC/11/32) on the ways forward with a view to a possible adoption of guiding principles. And we continued our efforts to integrate human rights in the development and poverty reduction work of the broader system through our support to the United Nations Development Group, the Action 2 Programme, the resident coordinator system, and United Nations country teams across the globe.

### **C. Economic, social and cultural rights**

55. On 10 December 2008, the General Assembly took a significant step towards strengthening the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights by adopting the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The successful negotiation of this new instrument, with OHCHR substantive and technical support, marks a true milestone in the development of international human rights. The Optional Protocol reflects the equal value of all human rights and the importance of access to judicial remedies in the case of their violation. Advocacy for the ratification of the Optional Protocol has become a key component of OHCHR efforts for the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, including through its field presences.

56. The Office has continued to build its own expertise, both at Headquarters and in the field, on economic, social and cultural rights, in order to step up its leadership and advocacy in this area. A number of additional thematic reports, publications and tools, including by field offices, have contributed to strengthening conceptual understanding of United Nations system partners, Governments, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations on these rights. These include fact sheets on frequently asked questions on economic, social and cultural rights and on the right to health, as well as a guidance note for field presences on integrating the right to food in the United Nations system-wide response to the global food crisis. My annual report to the Economic and Social Council in 2009 (E/2009/90), addressed ways and means to measure progress in the implementation of economic,

social and cultural rights through various monitoring, including budget and policy processes.

57. The global food crisis not only has implications for the enjoyment of the right to food and the right to be free from hunger but also far-reaching consequences for the realization of other human rights. The Office has advocated the integration of a human rights perspective in the response to the global food crisis, including through the Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, which OHCHR joined in February 2009. One of the issues emerging out of the food crisis is the increase of large-scale transnational land acquisitions and leases, more commonly referred to as "land grabbing". Human rights-based principles and measures should be put in place in order to ensure that such investments work for the benefit of the population including the most vulnerable groups.

58. In a significant effort to operationalize the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights through partnerships, the Office has sought to strengthen its institutional relations with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and continued its cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other members of the Secretary-General's High-level Task Force.

#### **D. Indigenous peoples and minorities**

59. Indigenous issues and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples remained a priority for OHCHR. The Office contributed actively to the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, notably to roll-out the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues. It conducted training on indigenous issues for United Nations country teams and for OHCHR field presences.

60. The Office continued to build capacity among indigenous peoples, including through its Indigenous Fellowship Programme, offered in four languages. The Office reinforced the Russian language component of the Programme and supported follow-up by offering national fellowships with OHCHR presences in Africa and Latin America.

61. In addition to assisting the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, OHCHR supported the new Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Following the inaugural session of the Expert Mechanism, the Office organized an inclusive workshop to contribute to the Mechanism's study on the right of indigenous peoples to education, to be submitted to the Human Rights Council.

62. The Office carried out a range of country-specific activities to advance the rights of indigenous peoples, and it pursued thematic work on issues such as extractive industries and on the rights of isolated indigenous peoples.

63. Protection of minorities remained a key theme for the Office. The OHCHR Minorities Fellowship Programme built advocacy skills of minority representatives, who subsequently launched concrete initiatives advancing minority rights at the local level. The Programme was carried out in cooperation with a range of United Nations system agencies and with the Council of Europe as a new partner. OHCHR

promoted inter-agency cooperation also through its leadership in the Inter-Agency Group on Minorities.

64. The Forum on Minority Issues, organized with the Independent Expert on minority issues, has become a key platform for thematic discussions on minority rights. The inaugural session produced recommendations on the right to education, and in 2009 the Forum will examine minorities and effective political participation. OHCHR expanded its work on policing and minorities, highlighting this issue in the context of the Conference and launching the process of collecting good practices through regional workshops.

65. The OHCHR work at the country level included a range of concrete projects, including on Afro-descendants in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. OHCHR continued to raise awareness on minority issues globally also through a regular newsletter on minority rights.

## **E. Migration and trafficking**

66. One of the themes that emerged as a priority in the Durban follow-up debate but also in the context of the global economic crisis is the human rights of migrants. I sought to promote a human rights approach to migration by placing human rights standards at the centre of migration considerations and making use of existing human rights mechanisms to protect the human rights of migrants.

67. My Office, including at the country level, has raised awareness about violations of the human rights of migrants related to discrimination, xenophobia and racism; access to economic, social and cultural rights; criminalization and detention of irregular migrants; and the impact of the economic crisis on migrants.

68. Through the Global Migration Group, OHCHR actively sought to promote and mainstream a human rights approach to migration within the United Nations system, including by contributing to a joint publication on migration and human rights. In 2009, the Office co-hosted a panel discussion on migration, discrimination and economic, social and cultural rights, together with ILO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and actively participated in the IOM Executive Committee panels on the human rights of migrants. In 2008, OHCHR organized an expert meeting on children and migration, in cooperation with the Government of Mexico, and conducted a public information campaign highlighting human rights concerns related to immigration detention as part of the "Dignity and Justice for Detainees Week".

69. OHCHR has contributed towards the promotion of a rights-based approach to the way in which human trafficking is addressed, placing the trafficked person at the centre of an effective response. This has been reflected in a number of advocacy efforts by the Office during the reporting period, including in an interactive dialogue of the General Assembly in May 2009 on the theme "Taking collective action to end human trafficking". OHCHR has elaborated a series of tools for use by States, intergovernmental organizations, human rights bodies, non-governmental organizations and individuals to further the goal of preventing trafficking and protecting the rights of victims. For example, OHCHR is developing a comprehensive legal commentary and policy analysis of the Recommended

Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking. OHCHR is also a member of the Steering Committee of the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT), and has undertaken joint programming on trafficking in different regions, together with other UN.GIFT partners. OHCHR held a meeting in March 2009 for members of the intergovernmental organization (IGO) Contact Group on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, a group coordinated by OHCHR since 2000, and comprising United Nations system agencies, NGOs and international organizations, working on trafficking.

## **F. Rule of law and democracy**

70. My Office has pursued its protection and empowerment programmes to facilitate and strengthen access to justice, and to ensure the harmonization of domestic legislation and procedures with international human rights law. Hence, OHCHR continues its engagement with and support to national legal systems and judiciaries, including through in-country training and seminars. One such example is the expert consultation on indigenous justice systems in the Americas, Australia and New Zealand to address the legal aspects of traditional justice systems, their conformity with international human rights principles and standards. OHCHR is also assisting Inter-Agency Standing Committee partners in co-chairing with UNDP the Protection Cluster's Sub-Working Group on the rule of law. It has developed a project on access to justice for internally displaced persons and a concept paper on the protection of NGOs in complex emergencies. It equally continued working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the joint United Nations Rule of Law Indicators Project.

71. OHCHR has a leading role in developing methodology and guidance tools in the area of transitional justice, and carrying out capacity-building activities in collaboration with the United Nations system and other actors. OHCHR published the third series of transitional justice tools, dealing with the issues of amnesties and of national consultations.

72. My Office also continued to strengthen accountability structures to ensure that violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law do not go unpunished. I have stressed the importance of credible and independent investigations of human rights and humanitarian law violations, for instance, in the context of Sri Lanka and Gaza.

73. To mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, OHCHR organized a seminar on the prevention of genocide, as a contribution to developing preventive strategies in January 2009.

74. My Office also encouraged systemic monitoring of the legal system by field presences, including those integrated in peace missions. In December 2008, OHCHR organized an expert workshop in Geneva to appraise the experiences and lessons learned in this regard.

75. Furthermore, my Office continues to advocate for the rights of victims of sexual violence, including through an assessment of the existing mechanisms for remedies and reparations for such victims. Towards this end, OHCHR is developing a pilot initiative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The idea is to empower



the victims by shifting the stigmatization of sexual violence from victim to perpetrator; by providing or facilitating access to assistance; and by creating a public and/or quasi-judicial forum for victims that will recognize the harm that has been done to them with a view as to ensure the effective implementation to their right to remedy and reparation. A mission to develop this project was fielded in April 2009. OHCHR also conducted a mapping exercise of the most serious violations of human rights and international law, including gender- and sexual-based violence, committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003. The deployment phase took place between October 2008 and May 2009. I intend to make the report public by the end of the year. This will be the first and only comprehensive United Nations report documenting major human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo covering this period with the aim of contributing to a reversal of the trend of endless cycles of impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

76. OHCHR plays an active role in the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force established by the Secretary-General under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Plan of Action, and leads its Working Group on Protecting Human Rights While Countering Terrorism.

77. OHCHR is also active in the system-wide Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, through which we are working with our partners to advance coherent and coordinated approaches to the rule of law, and to ensure that all United Nations activities in this area are firmly based on the Organization's human rights standards and norms. As a core member, we are actively working with our partners to implement its strategic plan.

78. Steady progress was also made in the achievement of OHCHR strategic objectives for democracy. OHCHR contributes to the efforts of the United Nations policymaking bodies to define a common framework for democracy assistance. OHCHR continues working towards strengthening democratic governance institutions, with a focus on enhancing parliaments' capacity besides its long-term engagement with national judiciaries. Within the same context, OHCHR continues to provide expert advisory assistance in new Constitution-building processes and constitutional reform.

79. As Chair of the Programme Consultative Group of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), and as a member of the Democracy Working Group of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, OHCHR has helped to ensure that the Organization's work on democracy is firmly rooted in the universally agreed standards contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other applicable human rights instruments.

80. Guidance material, including best practices, are currently being prepared to address the issue of protection of witnesses to serious human rights violations and international crimes, to assist States in the development of their strategies on the subject, in particular those that are crucial for high-level investigations and trials. Also, together with the Institute for International Criminal Investigations, OHCHR cooperated in the production of the manual on human rights investigations.

## **G. Global Compact and human rights responsibilities of business**

81. OHCHR continued its work to deepen the understanding of human rights by companies participating in the Global Compact. In collaboration with partners, two new tools for companies aimed at enhancing the understanding of human rights and of the modalities for integrating human rights into business management were completed: *Human Rights Translated: A Business Reference Guide*, jointly in 2008 with the United Nations Global Compact Office, the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law and the International Business Leaders Forum; an updated version of “A Guide for Integrating Human Rights into Business Management”, in collaboration with the Global Compact and the Business Leaders Initiative for Human Rights.

82. The Office also continues to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. The Special Representative’s policy framework on business and human rights provided opportunities for deepening OHCHR engagement on business and human rights at the field level. Missions were undertaken to Colombia and Liberia to build the capacity of OHCHR to work with relevant social actors on corporate-related human rights issues. As part of advocacy and leadership on business and human rights, I contributed an article to the *Annual Labour and Social Policy Review 2009*, published by the International Organization of Employers.

## **H. Human rights education and training**

83. The first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which has focused on human rights education in the school system, concludes in 2009 and OHCHR conducted a consultation on the focus of the next phase of the World Programme, to be reported on at the twelfth session of the Human Rights Council. While much has been achieved, the majority of countries have not completed stage 2 of the Plan of Action of the first phase, requiring the development of national action plans/strategies for human rights education. OHCHR disseminates best practices, such as a forthcoming joint publication on human rights education in schools, and provides human rights education advice and training services. OHCHR is also drafting a self-assessment tool for Governments on the integration of human rights education in the school system and a handbook on evaluating human rights education activities, to be released in early 2010. The Office also facilitates the work of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, including in its important ongoing work in preparing a draft Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training.

## **I. Climate change and human rights**

84. Mandated by the Council in its resolution 7/23, OHCHR recently completed a study, on the immediate and far-reaching threats that climate change poses to the protection of human rights of people and communities around the world. The OHCHR study, submitted to the Council in March 2009 (A/HRC/10/61), has provided important substantive guidance to international debates on the inter-linkage between climate change and human rights, including the impact of climate change on specific human rights and on particularly vulnerable populations,

as well as the corresponding human rights obligations to protect populations from the effects of climate change. Some of these concerns expressed by the Council in its resolution 10/4 on human rights and climate change, have been taken on board in the intergovernmental negotiations leading up to the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Copenhagen in August 2009.

## **J. Women's rights and gender work**

85. Protecting women's rights and gender, which are at the core of the work of my Office, is even more relevant at the time of this global economic crisis.

86. OHCHR programmes and planning focused on strengthened action at the country level and legal analysis, advocacy and development of tools in selected key areas of women's rights and gender issues. Based on legal analysis, OHCHR provides guidance on specific issues aimed at a wide audience, from the legal profession, NGOs, other United Nations system agencies and Member States. The initial focus has been on the question of the prosecution of sexual violence in the context of conflict and the commensurate social and economic rights that need to be addressed. Training materials for OHCHR and other United Nations staff have been produced. These include, inter alia, materials on investigation of gender-based violence; integration of gender into human rights monitoring and fact-finding, including a glossary of gender terms; and a commentary on the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking.

87. OHCHR has also increased its level of involvement in the activities of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN-Action), coordinating United Nations activities in this regard. Among other things, since August 2008, the Coordinator for UN-Action, previously based in New York, is hosted on OHCHR premises in Geneva.

88. OHCHR is providing guidance and assistance to governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to facilitate integration of women's rights and a gender perspective into the work of the Human Rights Council. Interaction has been established and further developed with various special procedures, Treaty bodies, and the universal periodic review process. In June 2009, the Council adopted by consensus a resolution on maternal mortality and morbidity, and requested OHCHR to prepare a thematic study to identify the human rights dimensions of preventable maternal mortality.

89. The Office is an active participant in inter-agency mechanisms dedicated to gender issues at United Nations Headquarters, and contributes to the system's support for the work of the Security Council on women, peace and security (resolution 1325 (2000)) and sexual violence in conflict (resolution 1820 (2008)).

90. The work on a gender strategy has advanced in a number of countries and gender advisers in four regional offices are to be deployed. Cooperation with other United Nations system agencies at the field level is strong through the mechanism of UN-Action. It is anticipated that, once in place, the United Nations gender architecture will assist in developing the normative role OHCHR plays in relation to human rights and gender at country level. To further strengthen gender mainstreaming and the integration of women's rights in the work of the Office,

terms of reference of an office-wide gender evaluation have been developed and a reference group created to guide the process.

## **K. Right to development**

91. OHCHR continued to promote the implementation of the right to development through research and analytical work, expert meetings and workshops, with a focus on clarifying the implications and values of the right to development for strengthening global partnerships for development. Through its research and operational support to the high-level task force of the working group on the right to development, OHCHR contributed to the mainstreaming of the right to development in policies and programmes of the institutions responsible for trade, aid, finance, and access to essential medicines. Through an expert meeting on methodological issues of qualitative and quantitative tools for measuring compliance with the right to development, OHCHR also contributed to the refinement of criteria for the assessment of policies and initiatives from the perspective of the right to development. Furthermore, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNICEF, OHCHR developed a joint working paper to provide strategic input to the third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Accra in September 2008, to support advocacy strategies from a human rights and gender equality standpoint. Consultations with civil society experts on human rights and financing for development resulted in concrete suggestions for the Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development, held in November 2008.

## Chapter VII

### **Mainstreaming human rights and enhancing partnerships**

92. The 2005 World Summit Outcome gave further impetus to the United Nations system-wide efforts to mainstream human rights in its activities, which will continue to be a priority for my Office across thematic areas and country-level work. Particular focus has been placed on strengthening support to the United Nations resident coordinator system, providing guidance, advice and training at the request of the resident coordinators and the United Nations country teams in response to national needs.

93. A strong partnership was forged with United Nations development agencies under the Action 2 inter-agency initiative led by my Office, which successfully concluded on 31 March 2009. Over the past four years, this programme supported more than 60 United Nations country teams in developing their capacity and that of national partners at their request in integrating human rights in their work and strengthening the national protection systems, and produced system-wide tools for training and advice in this field. In 2009, OHCHR has been leading consultations with United Nations partners to develop a follow-up mechanism to Action 2, which is aimed at further strengthening system-wide coherence, collaboration and support for human rights mainstreaming.

94. Reflecting such commitments at global political and inter-agency levels, an increasing number of United Nations country teams are integrating human rights in their work and supporting national capacity-building efforts aimed at strengthening national protection systems, including improving national laws, reporting to United Nations treaty bodies contributing to and following up on universal periodic review recommendations, and developing and implementing national programmes aimed at protecting the most vulnerable groups.

95. Annual reports prepared by resident coordinators indicate that United Nations country teams are increasingly working with national partners to integrate human rights into operational activities for development in support of national priorities. All 2008 joint stocktaking reports from the “Delivering as One” pilot countries also indicated considerable efforts made to integrate human rights into the piloting process as a cross-cutting issue representing the common value of the United Nations system. The mainstreaming capacity was strengthened both in the United Nations and the Governments through the organization of trainings to integrate human rights into development programming and analytical work, facilitated by theme groups or similar coordination mechanisms set up to ensure the integration of human rights in One Programme. Some pilot countries identified concrete joint programming opportunities to integrate human rights perspectives and respond to national capacity-building needs. In doing so, pilot countries sought to link relevant outcomes and processes of the Organization’s normative work under the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies with opportunities for joint United Nations programmatic responses and support at the country level.

96. During the period under review, OHCHR maintained its focus on the integration of human rights in all peace missions to reflect the ongoing reform process in relation to peace missions at the level of the United Nations system. Pursuant to the Secretary-General’s decisions on human rights in integrated missions and on integration, OHCHR participated in the development of policies

and operational guidance on the conceptualization and implementation of the integrated mission planning process. A joint review by OHCHR and the Department of Political Affairs is currently under way to assess and further improve integration of human rights in special political missions.

97. OHCHR continued to provide substantive and human resource support to the human rights components of peace missions and to ensure the quality of international human rights specialists in peace missions. OHCHR participated regularly in technical assessment missions led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, and in other planning activities in Chad, the Central African Republic, the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Guinea-Bissau, as well as Georgia/Abkhazia.

98. Our regular engagement with the Security Council, including through monthly briefings for the Presidency at their invitation, consultations with delegations, and contributions to the preparation of various reports of the Secretary-General to the Council, have helped to ensure that due consideration is given to critical human rights issues on the Council's agenda. I have equally been invited to attend and participate in two retreats of the Security Council members, the first one in November 2008 for new members on human rights and their relevance to peace and security, and the second in August 2009 on the effects of Security Council resolution 1265 (1999) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We equally continue to support, through established inter-agency mechanisms, the work of the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as its recent consideration of the question of respect for international humanitarian law in the maintenance of international peace and security.

99. While continuing to participate in inter-agency humanitarian mechanisms, particularly the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its subsidiary groups, and the Global Protection Cluster Working Group, emphasis has been placed this year on empowering human rights field presences to fully participate — and sometimes lead — in collaborative efforts. In support of this priority, OHCHR participated in norms-setting activities, including for example the ongoing development of a rapid-assessment tool in protection and standard operating procedures on protection in natural disasters. On the ground, OHCHR currently plays a lead role in protection coordination in: Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Fiji, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, north Lebanon, Nepal, Timor-Leste and the occupied Palestinian territories.

100. Internally, the Office has been working to better prepare human rights officers in understanding their role in humanitarian action, by organizing a workshop in April 2009, to examine policy, strategy, resources, tools and capacity gaps and challenges. Mainstreaming activities included supporting the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in establishing a course for humanitarian and resident coordinators on legal frameworks.

101. Finally, cognizant of the crucial importance to human rights of the intergovernmental and inter-agency processes at United Nations Headquarters, I have increased my missions to New York since my appointment as High Commissioner, allowing me to undertake direct and sustained consultations on critical human rights issues, and with senior departmental and agency counterparts, and, thereby, to advance, in particular, the integration of human rights across the work of the United Nations.

## Chapter VIII

### Conclusion

102. In these difficult times, the human rights challenges ahead both longstanding and emerging are immense but not insurmountable. Addressing them timely and adequately require an increased dialogue among all concerned stakeholders (member States, regional and intergovernmental organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations). We have to adopt new approaches and make full use of the United Nations human rights system as a whole, in particular its early warning mechanisms so as to make a real difference for the victims of human rights violations worldwide. Against this background, and following consultations, I have defined the following six themes that will be my priorities during my tenure: ensuring the realization of human rights in the context of migration; eliminating discrimination, in particular on the basis of race, sex or religion, and against marginalized groups; protecting economic, social and cultural rights in efforts to combat inequalities and poverty, including in the context of the economic, food and climate crises; protecting human rights in situations of armed conflict, violence and insecurity; combating impunity and strengthening accountability, the rule of law, and democratic societies; and strengthening international human rights mechanisms and the progressive development of international human rights law. I intend to further the mainstreaming of human rights in the policies and practices of the United Nations system, while enhancing the support to the resident coordinator system, the United Nations country teams and to United Nations peace missions. I also intend to take a leadership role in encouraging a human rights approach to global issues such as land-grabbing and its multidimensional impact on human rights.

103. My Office, working as one to maximize cross-fertilization, is currently developing holistic strategies in these areas. This would be the best way to uphold the principles of universality, indivisibility, interdependence and non-selectivity that will guide OHCHR under my leadership.

