

Australian Human Rights Commission

Mid-Term Report: Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions

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1. Introduction

AusAID has provided funding to the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) to enable the establishment of a secretariat within the Commission to support its work as the current Chair of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI). The Commission is Chair for two years.

The main intended outcomes of the project, as included in the Record of Understanding, are:

- (a) Improved administrative support for the activities of the CFNHRIs – including for meetings and workshops.
- (b) The establishment of an improved website which would be a source of information for Forum members and a place for the sharing of experiences and best practices.

It is intended that the project will allow the President of the Commission and a supporting staff member to:

- (a) Attend meetings of the CFNHRIs and its working parties;
- (b) Undertake selected research to support the Forum's working parties and other initiatives; and
- (c) Contribute to the objectives of the Forum.

The project commenced on 10 June 2011 and will be completed by 30 June 2013.

2. Background to the Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs

In 2007, following the work of a steering committee convened by the Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth NHRIs established a Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI). The CFNHRI is an informal and inclusive body of over 30 National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights – and other national accountability mechanisms with a human rights mandate – from all regions of the Commonwealth.

The Forum was established to promote networking; to facilitate the sharing of information, experiences and best practices; to encourage the establishment of NHRIs compliant with the Paris Principles; and to assist national institutions to fulfil their mandated activities. The Forum is intended to complement and support, and not to duplicate, the activities of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC), and existing regional bodies, such as the Asia Pacific Forum and the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions.

The Forum has met several times since 2007, generally annually – either alongside meetings of the ICC in Geneva, or alongside Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings.

The Australian Human Rights Commission, as the national human rights institution of the host country for the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) 2011, assumed the Chair of the CFNHRI at a meeting of the Forum held in London in May 2011. The Commission is Australia's national human rights institution accredited with "A status" by the ICC.

The Forum currently has two working groups: one on climate change and human rights (chaired by the Scottish Human Rights Commission); and one on disability (chaired by the Australian Human Rights Commission).

3. Activities

3a. General Secretariat Support

This project has enabled the Commission to employ one staff member (APS Level 6) to act as a single person secretariat to the CFNHRI. The Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London had previously been responsible for coordinating the Forum's work. The Australian Human Rights Commission has continued to work closely with Commonwealth Secretariat to support the objectives of the Forum. Other parts of the Commission have also been involved in supporting various aspect of this work – including the President, various Commissioners, the Executive Director, and policy teams (especially the Disability Rights Team).

An initial task of the Commission was to build and update a contact list of all Commonwealth NHRIs so that regular contact could be maintained. This contact list has been used by the Commission to coordinate the drafting of submissions, reports, and correspondence, as well as to raise suggestions and encourage discussion around possible Forum initiatives. The Commission has also used this email list to disseminate information and encourage members to share examples of their work with others. This work was done with the intention of encouraging members to view the Forum as a useful source of information and support for their work at the national level.

The Commission has observed that, as a result of these efforts, members are increasingly seeing value in the Forum. For example, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone has recently requested that the Australian Human Rights Commission use the Forum to collect best practice examples and ideas from other members on the role of NHRIs in promoting and protecting human rights during elections.¹ The Commission has observed a significant increase in the amount of networking facilitated through the Forum, with an increase in the level of communication traffic as members become increasingly responsive and eager to engage with one another through the email group. Other examples of secretariat work – including organising meetings and workshops, and coordinating submissions – are outlined below.

3b. Commonwealth Reform Process and CHOGM

This project takes place at a time of reform for the Commonwealth. The 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth received a report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) which, among other recommendations designed to reinvigorate the Commonwealth, called for the development of a Charter of Commonwealth Values and the appointment of a Commissioner for Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy.²

¹ Sierra Leone has presidential, parliamentary and local elections scheduled for November 2012 – the third since the end of that country's civil war. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone has developed a work plan outlining initiatives they plan to take in monitoring the elections and engaging with other stakeholders. The Australian Human Rights Commission is supporting this work by using the Forum to facilitate the exchange of experiences with other NHRIs who have done work around elections – including the National Human Rights Commission of Kenya who have done a significant amount of work on elections in the wake of Kenya's 2007 post-election violence. The Forum is an appropriate place for this exchange given the similar nature of political systems across the Commonwealth. The Australian Human Rights Commission is also engaging with two other NHRIs who have been involved in building the capacity of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone: the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Danish Institute of Human Rights.

² A copy of the EPG report is available at

http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/241620/eminant_persons_group_report.htm.

The CFNHRI has been actively engaging in this process. The Commission has used this project to increase its advocacy to CHOGM on the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international level. This included participating in the consultations around the draft EPG report in June 2011, by providing feedback on their draft recommendations – lending the Forum's support to its ideas for strengthening Commonwealth institutions for the improved protection and promotion of human rights, including through the development of a Charter of Commonwealth Values. The Forum supported the establishment of a Commissioner for Rule of Law and Democracy, but also called for human rights to also be included on the mandate.³ This change was reflected in the final EPG report.

The Forum subsequently submitted a statement to the Perth CHOGM calling on Heads of Government in October 2011 to place human rights front and centre in their discussions; and calling on them to establish, or where they already exist, to strengthen, national human rights institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles including by the provision of adequate resources to ensure their financial and administrative independence.⁴ For the first time, the final CHOGM Communique issued by the Heads of Governments included a specific reference to NHRIs and a commitment to 'continue to support their work'.

In the first four months of 2012, the Forum has been engaging with individual Commonwealth governments on the drafting of the Charter of Values. The Commission has coordinated submissions from the Forum which have been made to a number of governments – including Australia, Canada and New Zealand. It has also encouraged individual NHRIs to engage with government consultations on this issue where relevant.⁵ The submissions have called for the Charter to position human rights as a core Commonwealth value, and for the opposition to discrimination to be broadened to include specific reference to discrimination on the grounds of disability and sexual orientation and gender identity. We have also called for the Charter to recognise the key role of NHRIs in promoting and protecting human rights – alongside government and civil society.⁶

This work will be sustained in the lead up to the next CHOGM being held in Sri Lanka in late 2013 as the consultation process for these initiatives continues – particularly on the Charter and proposed Commissioner for Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy. This advocacy work has highlighted the potential value of the CFNHRI in acting as a collective voice for NHRIs on human rights issues at the national and international level. These efforts have been led and coordinated by the secretariat at the Australian Human Rights Commission.

3c. Annual Forum Meeting

The Australian Human Rights Commission organised the Forum's 2012 meeting in Geneva, Switzerland on 19, 20 and 22 March 2012 in the margins of the annual meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC). The meeting brought together more than 50 participants from 26 Commonwealth national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and ombudsman offices, as well observers from civil society organisations.⁷ This meeting built on discussions held

³ A copy of the Forum's feedback on the draft EPG report is available at http://cfnhri.org/?attachment_id=430.

⁴ A copy of the Forum's statement to CHOGM 2011 is available at <http://cfnhri.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/CFNHRI-CHOGM-Communique-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ The New Zealand Human Rights Commission has done this, for example, using its own submission to say it "strongly supports" the CFNHRI submission.

⁶ A copy of the Forum's submission regarding the Charter is available at http://cfnhri.org/?page_id=853.

⁷ The list of participants is appended at Appendix 1.

during the previous meeting of the CFNHRI in the UK in May 2011 – several months in advance of the Perth CHOGM in October 2011. The 2012 meeting consisted of a series of sessions involving presentations from members and external experts, as well as open discussions. Sessions included:

- Updates from the CFNHRI Working Groups on Climate Change and Human Rights, and Disability;
- Input and submissions from civil society organisations, including on enhancing the engagement between NHRIs and civil society;
- A discussion of the role of NHRIs in advancing the rights of children and older persons;
- The presentation of a potential new online community that could be established by CFNHRI as part of the Commonwealth Connects portal;
- A discussion of the role of NHRIs in the promotion and protection of the human rights of LGBTI people (see below for more information); and
- General Forum business.⁸

The agenda was designed to complement and avoid duplication with the ICC agenda. The meeting was also open to civil society organisations (CSOs), regional NHRI groupings and other national, regional and international organisations with an interest in the work of CFNHRI. The meeting facilitated the exchange of best practices and ideas between NHRIs. The Commission received positive feedback from members that this meeting provided a genuinely useful opportunity for networking and the sharing of ideas.

The Forum welcomed input and contributions from CSOs in the form of written submissions and oral interventions. Only the final session on general Forum business was closed. This decision to involve CSOs is part of the Forum's efforts to strengthen its engagement with civil society – including through its website, meetings and other activities (see below).

3d. Forum Website

Another aspect of this project has been to build the Forum's online presence, including through the development of a new website (<http://cfnhri.org/>).⁹ The two objectives of this initiative are to:

- a) Ensure that the website will be a source of information for Forum members and a place for the sharing of experiences and best practices, and
- b) Promote the work of the Forum as a whole, and the work of individual member NHRIs, to external stakeholder – serving to strengthen the advocacy of both.

The Commission has updated the website's overall look and feel, making it easier for members and other stakeholders to use and access information. It has also moved the website to a new content management system, making it easier to manage and update the website. This process also involved the development of a logo for the Forum, which has subsequently been used for a wide variety of other purposes. The Commission has also launched a Twitter feed alongside the website, again for the dual purpose of sharing

⁸ A copy of the Agenda is included at Appendix 2.

⁹ Screen shot of the new homepage is included at Appendix 3.

information between those members who are on Twitter, and amplifying the advocacy efforts of individual NHRIs and the Forum generally.¹⁰

The new website includes general information about the Forum; information about member institutions (including contact details); events and news from the Forum and about individual member NHRIs; a list of useful publications; and information about the Forum's two working groups – on disability, and on climate change and human rights. The climate change and human rights section of the website will be developed into a useful source of information for members and others about the link between climate change and human rights, and the work that Commonwealth NHRIs can and are doing in this area. The Commission is working with the Scottish Human Rights Commission, the Chair of the Forum's working group on climate change, on this aspect of the website. It will be updated with case studies of NHRI work in this area.

The Commission will continue collecting and drafting content for the site so that it becomes a dynamic and useful source of information. It is monitoring the traffic of the new website, and will use this data to assess the websites effectiveness in reaching a wide audience.

3e. Forum Working Group on Disability

The CFNHRI Working Group on Disability was established at the last meeting of the Forum in Bracknell, UK, in May 2011. The working group consists of representatives from NHRIs in Canada, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Great Britain, and Australia – which also acts as Chair. This decision to create a working group was based on the fact that disability has been identified as a high priority for NHRIs, governments, disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and persons with disabilities internationally as a result of the introduction of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD).¹¹

Disability has also been a significant aspect of the Forum's advocacy around CHOGM 2011 and the Commonwealth reform process generally. The Forum used its statement to CHOGM to call on those governments who have not yet ratified the Convention to do so, and for those who have, to focus their efforts on effective implementation. The Forum has also used its involvement around the development of the Charter of the Commonwealth to advocate the promotion and protection of the rights of people with disability. The draft Charter included a provision opposing discrimination on all grounds '*whether it be based in race, ethnicity, creed or gender or other like cause.*' In its submissions, the Forum has called for specific reference to discrimination on the grounds of disability (as well on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity), to be added.¹²

The Commission is also using its role as Chair of the Forum to organise a workshop on the rights of people with disability in Kampala, Uganda, from 15-17 May 2012. The workshop is designed to build the capacity of NHRIs and DPOs to engage effectively with each other and with Government to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities in their respective countries. The program will include training on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and implementation and monitoring of the Convention. It will also cover topics such as shadow reporting, effective strategies for NHRI/DPO

¹⁰ The Forum's Twitter feed is available at <http://twitter.com/#!/CFNHRI>

¹¹ As March 2012, 27 of the 54 Commonwealth countries have become party to the CRPD. 17 Commonwealth countries have signed but not yet ratified the Convention, with a further 10 having yet to either sign or ratify. Of the 34 countries with institutions represented in this Forum, 31 have signed or ratified the CRPD (23 countries have ratified and 8 have signed).

¹² A copy of the Forum's submission regarding the Charter is available at http://cfnhri.org/?page_id=853.

cooperation, consultation and successful approaches to advocacy. It will include presentations, discussions and group work sessions to allow for the sharing of best practices and ideas amongst participants.¹³

The workshop, which is being hosted by the Uganda Human Rights Commission, will bring together representatives of NHRIs and DPOs from six East African countries for discussions around advancing the rights of people with disability in these countries. Participants will be from NHRIs and DPOs from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

There will be 2 DPO representatives (1 male / 1 female) and 2 NHRI representatives (1 male / 1 female) from each country – nominated by their organisations, who have been asked to give thought to which individuals they believe will benefit most from the training. Other factors that organisations have been asked to consider are representation from metropolitan and rural areas; and diversity of disability. A short questionnaire has also been distributed that will help gauge capacity, and get a sense of experiences, of participating NHRIs and DPOs so as to better tailor the training. The workshop builds, in part, on the AusAID funded work done by the Commission in the Pacific, in cooperation with the Pacific Disability Forum.

The group of trainers/facilitators will include:

- Mr Graeme Innes, Disability Discrimination Commissioner at Australian Human Rights Commission
- Ms Rachel Kachaje, Chairperson Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum and Past Chairperson of the Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD)
- Dr Elly Macha, Coordinator, East African Federation of the Disabled
- Ms Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, Disability and Inclusive Development Coordinator USAID, and former Commissioner at South African Human Rights Commission
- Ms Cristina Ricci, Senior Policy Officer, Australian Human Rights Commission

The workshop is being organised with the Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (CDPF). It is hoped that the cooperation between the CDPF, CFNHRI and other partners through this activity will contribute to the strengthening of DPO/NHRI relationships at the national, regional and international levels. The workshop is also part of the CFNHRI's effort to engage more actively with civil society. The workshop is being viewed as a pilot activity – which, subject to securing additional funding could be rolled out in other regions across the Commonwealth.

3f. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The Commission has used its position as Chair of the Forum to strategically engage the Forum on the issue of human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity – taking advantage of the increasing momentum that this issue is receiving in the Commonwealth, where 41 of 54 states continue to criminalise homosexuality, and the unique role that NHRIs are placed to play as a bridge between Government and civil society.

LGBTI issues were first discussed at the May 2011 meeting of the Forum in the UK. The Commission decided to build on these discussions by suggesting that the issue be placed formally on the agenda of the March 2012 meeting in Geneva and received positive feedback from members for this idea.¹⁴

¹³ Please find attached an agenda for the training at Appendix 4.

¹⁴ To the Commission's knowledge, sexual orientation and gender identity has never before been on the agenda of the ICC or the Network of African NHRIs; it has been on the agenda of the Asia Pacific

On the third day of the Geneva meeting, the Forum held a session on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity. The Commission invited non-Commonwealth NHRIs to attend the session and promoted the event widely with other interested parties at the Palais de Nations.¹⁵ More than 60 people attended the session. The Commission organised for Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, former UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK) and an expert on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, delivered the keynote presentation.¹⁶ The session was chaired by Mr Med Kaggwa, Chairperson of the Uganda Human Rights Commission and included oral interventions by representatives from two NGOs – the Human Dignity Trust and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance. Having the session chaired by an NHRI from the global South was considered important and having the session chaired by Mr Kaggwa was valuable given the current context in Uganda, with the controversy around the proposed parliamentary anti-homosexuality bill.¹⁷

Professor Muntarbhorn's presentation surveyed recent developments at the national, regional and international levels with regard to LGBTI. He cited a range of best practice examples of NHRI work in the areas. He also spoke about the impact of laws which outlaw homosexuality– including on HIV/AIDS prevention – and about the key role that NHRIs can play in public education and engaging with Government on the issue. Eleven Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth NHRIs shared experiences in the highly engaging and free flowing discussion that followed. There was widespread agreement that the Forum should continue to provide members with more information on the subject so that members can begin to consider strategies for engaging Government on the issues.¹⁸ This Commission received extremely positive feedback from members and others for this session, including the following from a representative from the International HIV/AIDS Alliance:

“Thank you so much for the opportunity of addressing the CFNHRI. It was an extraordinary session. I take a lot from it, especially all the good work on sexual orientation and gender identity that so many human rights institutions are doing despite very difficult environments. I think CFNHRI is a great forum of free exchange of points of views and strategies, congratulations on your great job in making it work!”

The Commission is currently working with members and civil society to build on these discussions by developing a collection of useful resources to circulate to members – including material about the international context, as well as national level case studies. The Commission meets with and is engaging closely with other stakeholders on these issues, including representatives from the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Human Dignity Trust and the Commonwealth HIV/AIDS Action Group. In this way, the Commission is trying to modestly and strategically build the capacity of the Forum and its members to promote and protect the rights of people who are LGBTI. It is pleased with the level and quality of frank and open discussion it has been able

Forum of NHRIs in recent years –including through a workshop on the Yogyakarta Principles it held in May 2009.

¹⁵ For more information, please see the poster used to promote the session included at Appendix 5.

¹⁶ Professor Muntarbhorn was known to be a diplomatic presenter and extremely well versed in navigating discussions in this area, aware of the delicate and sensitive nature of the issue with respect to many NHRIs, particularly from Africa.

¹⁷ Mr Kaggwa had recently made a strong statement against the bill at the UN Human Rights Council in the context of Uganda's UPR appearance.

¹⁸ These efforts are being given added momentum by developments at the international level, including the UN Human Rights Council's first session on LGBTI in March 2012 and the first report on discrimination and violence faced by people who are LGBTI by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights published in late 2011.

to facilitate on LGBTI, given the extremely sensitive nature of this issue in many of the countries where Forum members operate.

3g. Strategic Interventions

The Commission is using its role as Chair of the Forum to coordinate strategic interventions with regard to the situation of individual NHRIs. This is in keeping with the Forum's terms of reference which state that the Forum will,

...coordinate and allow for collective (consensus-based) expressions of support, encouragement or concern, in relation to particular events and developments affecting NHRIs individually or collectively, for the better defence and promotion of human rights

As a collective voice for NHRIs in the Commonwealth, the Forum is well placed to make these expressions, where appropriate and constructive. For example, following the arrest of the Chairperson of the Malawi Human Rights Commission, and earlier attacks on other human rights defenders, the Commission drafted and coordinated input from other members on a statement expressing the Forum's concern and calling on the Government of Malawi to comply with its international obligations relating to the protection of human rights defenders.¹⁹ The statement was circulated widely to media outlets, members and civil society and read out by the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission at the UN Human Rights Council.

The Commission received positive feedback from stakeholders in Malawi and elsewhere about the statement, as well as the value of such statements generally. One staff of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (an independent NGO that also monitors the human rights situation in Malawi) told the Commission that the Forum's statement was 'useful' and had been circulated widely, and that the Forum – as a network of NHRIs – had a degree of 'influence' and 'clout' that could be useful in such circumstances. The Commission is keeping a watching brief on Malawi – where there is a new President and where new commissioners are due to be appointed to the NHRI – and a number of other country situations where a statement may be considered constructive in the future.²⁰ It is also developing a media list for the easy and effective dissemination of any statements in the future.

3h. Building Relationships with Civil Society

The Commission is also using its period as Chair to strengthen the Forum's engagement with civil society. Recognising the need for NHRIs – both individually and collectively – to work closely with civil society, as recommended by the Paris Principles, the Commission has sought to build relationships with civil society organisations. This has included regular communication with a number of NGOs, including the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI). We have compiled a contact list for this purpose with the help of CHRI. It has also involved the Commission consulting with NGOs on various initiatives, including the development of the new website and the drafting of submissions. This was also reflected in the Commission's decision – made in consultation with other members – to invite civil society to attend the March 2012 meeting in Geneva, and to make written submission and oral

¹⁹ The final statement is included at Appendix 6.

²⁰ For example, the Chairman of the Governing Council of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nigeria, Dr. Chidi Anselm Odinkalu, was recently summoned by police following comments he made about extrajudicial killings. In this instance, the Commission brought the events to the Forum's attention. However, a decision was made not to issue a statement at this stage, but to closely monitor the situation, and to reserve the issuing of a statement pending a further deterioration.

interventions at the meeting. Six NGOs made oral interventions over during the meeting and all expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to engage with the Forum's members. The CHRl gave the Commission the following feedback:

"... we would like to thank you for giving civil society the opportunity to participate in the CFNHRI meeting. This has certainly set a good foundation for future consultation and engagement between NHRIs and CSOs and we look forward to other such opportunities."

The workshop on disability in Uganda in May 2012 is being used as another initiative to engage with civil society through the involvement of DPOs.

4. Conclusion

This project has begun to achieve outcomes in strengthening the capacity of the Forum to support the work of individual NHRIs in promoting and protecting human rights across the Commonwealth in line with its proposed objectives. This has been both at the administrative and functional level – with regard to organising meetings, building the new website, and facilitating the sharing of information – and also on substantive human rights issues – including disability, climate change and human rights, and sexual orientation and gender identity. With members and external stakeholders seeing increasing value in the Forum, the Commission is well placed to build on these outcomes during the second year of the project.

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT LIST, GENEVA MEETING, MARCH 2012

Country	Name and Position
Australia	Ms Catherine Branson, QC President Australian Human Rights Commission
Australia	Ms Padma Raman Executive Director Australian Human Rights Commission
Australia	Mr Michael Edwards Secretariat and Research Officer, Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions Australian Human Rights Commission
Bangladesh	Prof. Dr. Mizanur Rahman Chairman Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission
Bangladesh	Mr Kazi Reazul Hoque Full-Time Member Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission
Cameroon	Dr. Chemuta Divine Banda Chairman National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms
Canada	Mr David Langtry Acting Chief Commissioner Canadian Human Rights Commission
Canada	Ms Monette Maillet Director, Policy and International Relations Canadian Human Rights Commission
Ghana	Ms Laretta Lamprey Chairperson Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
Great Britain	Mr John Wadham General Counsel Equality and Human Rights Commission
Great Britain	Ms Diana Copper Head of European and International Policy Equality and Human Rights Commission

India	Justice K.G. Balakrishnan Chairperson National Human Rights Commission
India	Shri P.C. Sharma Member National Human Rights Commission
India	Dr. Rajiv Sharma Secretary General National Human Rights Commission
India	Shri B.S. Nagar Under Secretary (Coord) National Human Rights Commission
India	Shri Rishi Pal PS to Chairperson National Human Rights Commission
Jamaica	Ms Lorna Errar Deputy Public Defender Office of the Public Defender
Kenya	Dr Samuel Tororei Acting Chairperson Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
Lesotho	Ms Neile Alina Matsoana Fanana Ombudsman Office of the Ombudsman
Malawi	Mr John Kapito Chairperson Malawi Human Rights Commission
Malaysia	Tan Sri Hasmy Agam Chairman Human Rights Commission of Malaysia – SUHAKAM
Malaysia	Mr Mohamad Azizi Azmi Officer Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
Malaysia	Mr Mohd Hairul Fahmi Mohd Harris Officer International Issues and Co-operation Committee Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
Maldives	Ms Maryam Azra Ahmed President Human Rights Commission of the Maldives

Mauritius	Mr Dheeruj Seetulsingh Chairman
Namibia	Mr John Walters Ombudsman
New Zealand	Mr David Rutherford Chief Human Rights Commissioner New Zealand Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland	Ms Christine Collins Commissioner Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland	Ms Marion Reynolds Commissioner Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Northern Ireland	Ms Virginia McVea Director Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Nigeria	Professor Bem Angwe Executive Secretary / Commissioner National Human Rights Commission
Papua New Guinea	Ms Phoebe Sangetari Ombudsman Ombudsman Commission
Rwanda	Mr Kayumba Deogratias Vice Chairperson National Commissioner for Human Rights
Scotland	Prof Alan Miller Chairperson Scottish Human Rights Commission
Scotland	Mr Diego Quiroz Policy Officer Scottish Human Rights Commission
Sierra Leone	Ms Jamesina King Commissioner Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
Sierra Leone	Rev Moses Khanu Commissioner Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
Sierra Leone	Ms Francess Piagie Alghali

	Executive Secretary Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
South Africa	Adv. Lawrence Mushwana Chairperson South African Human Rights Commission
South Africa	Ms Lindiwe Mokate Commissioner South African Human Rights Commission
Tanzania	Hon. (Retired) Justice Amiri Manento Chairman Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance
Trinidad and Tobago	Ms Lynette Stephenson SC Ombudsman of Trinidad and Tobago Office of the Ombudsman
Uganda	Mr Med Kaggwa Chairperson Uganda Human Rights Commission
Zambia	Mr Enoch Mulembe Director Human Rights Commission
OBSERVERS AND PRESENTERS	
Commonwealth Secretariat	Ms Treva Braun Human Rights Adviser Commonwealth Secretariat
Asia Pacific Forum (APF)	Ms Pip Dargan Deputy Director Asia Pacific Forum
Chulalongkorn University	Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn Professor of Law Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (CFPF)	Mr Richard Rieser Treasurer and UK link Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)	Mr Rajiv Joshi Honorary Consultant Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
Human Dignity Trust	Mr Kapil Gupta Researcher Human Dignity Trust
International HIV/AIDS Alliance	Mr Enrique Restoy Campaign Manager

	International HIV/AIDS Alliance
NGO Group on the Rights of the Child	Ms Lisa Myers Director NGO Group on the Rights of the Child
NGO Group on the Rights of the Child	Ms Anita Goh Advocacy Officer NGO Group on the Rights of the Child
Network of African NHRIs (NANHRI)	Mr Gilbert Sebihogo Executive Director Network of African NHRIs (NANHRI)
APOLOGIES	
Antigua and Barbuda	Mrs J. M. Eusalyn Lewis OBE Ombudsman Office of the Ombudsman
Barbados	Mr Valton Bend Ombudsman Office of the Ombudsman
Belize	No Ombudsman at Present Ombudsman Office of the Ombudsman
Botswana	Ms Festina Bakwena Ombudsman Office of the Ombudsman
Botswana	Mr Ramatlotlo Selel Principal Legal Investigator (RMS) Office of the Ombudsman
Great Britain	Mr Trevor Phillips Chairman Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR)
Jamaica	Mr Windsor Earl Witter, QC Public Defender Office of the Public Defender
Seychelles	Mr Cedric Gustave Dodin Ombudsman
Seychelles	Mr Nichol Rusell Jean Gabriel Office of the Ombudsman and Human Rights Commissioner
Sierra Leone	Mr Raymond Katta Deputy Executive Secretary Human Rights Commission, Sierra Leone

Sri Lanka	Justice Priyantha Perera Chairman National Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
St Kitts and Nevis	Mr Walford V Gumbs Ombudsman
St Lucia	Mr Flannan Johnson Cenac Parliamentary Commissioner
Swaziland	Mr Sabelo M Masuku Acting Chairperson Swaziland Human Rights Commission

APPENDIX 2: AGENDA, GENEVA MEETING, MARCH 2012

Day One: Monday 19 March 2012, Room XXV

13:15-13:30	WELCOME AND OPENING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hon Catherine Branson QC, President, Australian Human Rights Commission • Ms Treva Braun, Human Rights Adviser, Commonwealth Secretariat
13:30-14:20	REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISABILITY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Alan Miller, Chair, Scottish Human Rights Commission • Hon Catherine Branson QC, President, Australian Human Rights Commission
14:20-14:55	PRESENTATIONS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Richard Rieser, Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (CDPF) • Mr Rajiv Joshi, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) • Ms Anita Goh, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

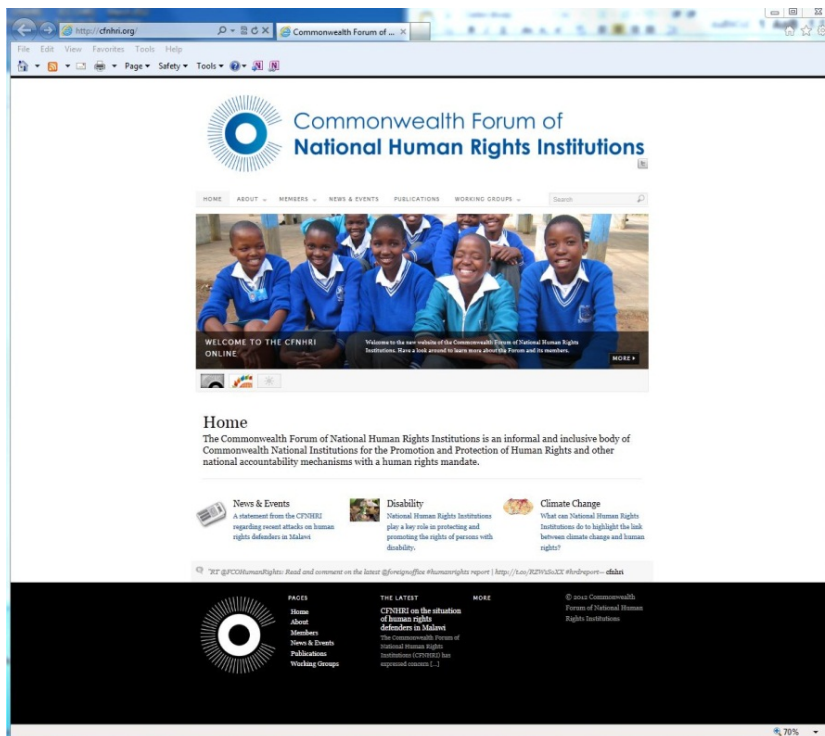
Day Two: Tuesday 20 March 2012, Room XXV

13:15-14:15	PANEL ON NHRIS AND THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND OLDER PERSONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice Ramadhani Manento, Chairperson, Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance, Tanzania • Commissioner Lindiwe Mokate, South African Human Rights Commission • Mr John Wadham, General Counsel, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Britain <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><i>Chair: Professor Mizanur Rahman, Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh</i></p>
14:15-14:45	INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMONWEALTH COMMUNITIES PLATFORM: OPTIONS FOR A NEW ONLINE COMMUNITY FOR CFNHRI
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthony Ming, Adviser (Informatics), Commonwealth Secretariat

Day Three: Thursday 22 March 2012, Room XXIV

13:15-14:30	HUMAN RIGHTS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: THE CONTRIBUTION OF NHRIS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University <i>Chair: Mr Med Kagawa, Chairperson, Uganda Human Rights Commission</i> • Brief CSO interventions: Mr Kapil Gupta, Human Dignity Trust and Mr Enrique Restoy, International HIV/AIDS Alliance
14:30-14:55	GENERAL FORUM BUSINESS – CLOSED SESSION
	<i>Hon Catherine Branson QC, President, Australian Human Rights Commission</i>

APPENDIX 3: SCREEN SHOT OF NEW HOMEPAGE



**APPENDIX 4: TRAINING PROGRAM, JOINT WORKSHOP ON RIGHTS OF
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY, APRIL 2012**

DAY ONE – TUESDAY 15 MAY 2012

**SESSION 1: WELCOME, OVERVIEW AND RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY IN
EAST AFRICA**

9.00 Welcome

Open

Introductions and workshop overview

9.45 PANEL: Overview - rights of people with disability in East Africa.

OPEN SESSION: Issues and challenges for people with disability in East Africa

10.45 **MORNING TEA**

SESSION 2: HUMAN RIGHTS, DPOs and NHRIs

11.15 PANEL: Disability awareness and human rights

Role and functions of DPOs and NHRIs

GROUP WORK: DPOs and NHRIs - roles, current work, achievements and challenges in relation to promotion and protection of rights of people with disability

**SESSION 3: THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
(Disability Convention): OVERVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION**

12.30 PANEL: Disability Convention: Overview

1.00 **LUNCH**

1.45 Disability Convention: Rights of people with disability

3.30 **AFTERNOON TEA**

4.00 PANEL: Disability Convention - Implementation

4.20 GROUP WORK: Sharing experiences in East Africa in relation to implementation of the Disability Convention

5.00 **CLOSE**

DAY TWO – WEDNESDAY 16 MAY 2012

SESSION 1: DISABILITY CONVENTION - MONITORING

9.00 PANEL: Article 33

Data and indicators

State reports

Shadow reports and how to write shadow reports

OPEN SESSION: Sharing of experiences in East Africa in relation to monitoring

SESSION 2: COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES and CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES

10.00 PANEL: The Committee and Committee consideration of reports

The Optional Protocol and complaints

Conference of States Parties

OPEN SESSION: Questions and sharing of experiences

11.00 **MORNING TEA**

11.30 GROUP WORK: Monitoring the Disability Convention

1.00 **LUNCH**

SESSION 3: SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES TO ADVOCACY AND NHRIs AND DPOs WORKING TOGETHER TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT RIGHTS

1.45 PANEL: Successful strategies for NHRI and DPO cooperation

Successful approaches to working with government

OPEN SESSION: Discussion

GROUP WORK: Sharing experiences and best practices

3.30 **AFTERNOON TEA**

4.00 GROUP WORK: Article 29: Participation in Political and Public Life. Development of a plan of action – NHRIs and DPOs working together.

5.00 **CLOSE**

DAY THREE – THURSDAY 16 MAY 2012

SESSION 1: DISABILITY POLICY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT BY GOVERNMENT

9.00 PANEL: Government policy, policy development and the Disability Convention

Mainstreaming disability

Human rights-based approach to policy development

OPEN SESSION: Policy development, implementation, monitoring and reporting What does this mean for NHRIs and DPOs?

10.45 **MORNING TEA**

SESSION 2: BUILDING CAPACITY OF DPOS AND NHRIS – A PLAN OF ACTION

11.15 GROUP WORK - PARALLEL SESSIONS: Preparation of a plan of action for each DPO and NHRI

 GROUP 1: DPO Representatives – Building capacity of DPOs

 GROUP 2: NHRI Representatives – Building capacity of NHRIs

1.00 **LUNCH**

SESSION 2: DPOS AND NHRIS WORKING TOGETHER – A PLAN OF ACTION

1.45 GROUP WORK – (DPO and NHRI representatives to work in country groups) – Preparation of a joint plan of action for DPOs and NHRIs to work together to promote and protect the rights of people with disability in each country

3.30 **AFTERNOON TEA**

4.00 GROUP WORK (continued) - Preparation of a joint plan of action for DPOs and NHRIs to work together to promote and protect the rights of people with disability in each country

Evaluation

Wrap up

5.00 **CLOSE**

**APPENDIX 5: POSTER FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY
SESSION**

**HUMAN RIGHTS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND
GENDER IDENTITY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD:
THE CONTRIBUTION OF NHRIS**

Thursday 22 March 2012, 13:15-14:30, Room XXIV



**Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, Faculty of Law,
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok**

Please join the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) for a discussion on the role of National Human Rights Institutions in the promotion and protection of the human rights of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn is Professor of Law at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. From 2004 to 2010 he served as UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Democratic People's Republic of Korea. From 1990-1994 he served as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In 2004 he was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education. He is member of the Asia Pacific Forum's Advisory Council of Jurists.



**Commonwealth Forum of
National Human Rights Institutions**

APPENDIX 6: FORUM STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN MALAWI

The Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) has expressed concern about the recent arrest of Mr John Kapito, the Chairperson of the Malawi Human Rights Commission.

The arrest of Mr Kapito on Saturday – on charges of possessing seditious materials and holding foreign currency without proper documentation – is the latest in a series of incidents that appear to point to a deteriorating human rights climate in Malawi. Mr Kapito has in recent months identified shortcomings in the Government of Malawi's protection of other human rights defenders from threats, intimidation and violence.

Mr Kapito, who has since been released on bail, was due to travel to Geneva this week for meetings of the CFNHRI and the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions.

This latest incident follows the arrest of lawyer and human rights activist Mr Ralph Kasambara, who was detained late last month despite being granted bail. Other lawyers and human rights defenders have reportedly been the victims of attacks and threats.

The CFNHRI echoes calls from the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), a member of the Forum, for the Government of Malawi to protect human rights defenders from all such attacks. The Forum calls on the Government of Malawi to acknowledge the essential role of human rights defenders as recognised by the 2010 UN Human Rights Council resolution on human rights defenders – including by promoting a safe environment where human rights defenders can perform their important work, and by promptly and effectively investigating any alleged attacks against them.

The CFNHRI is an informal and inclusive body of over 30 National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, and other national accountability mechanisms with a human rights mandate, from all regions of the Commonwealth. The Forum calls on the Government of Malawi to take concrete steps towards the better protection of human rights defenders in the country.

For further information, please contact Michael Edwards at the Australian Human Rights Commission: michael.edwards@humanrights.gov.au.