

## **Workshop on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

Room No. XIX, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 4 and 5 October 2016

15:00 – 16:45

### **Panel 2: Procedural aspects of cooperation between United Nations, RHRMs, CSOs and HRDs**

Panelist: Mina Rolovic-Jočić, Assistant Secretary General in the office of the Serbian Ombudsman

#### Talking Points

- I will speak from the NHRI perspective.
- As known, the Paris Principles require national human rights institutions to cooperate with the United Nations and regional human rights mechanisms.
- National Ombudsman of Serbia has been accredited as A status NHRI since 2010. Ever since, we have tried to intensify and further develop our cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms, especially treaty bodies. In average, we produce two to three reports to the UN treaty bodies annually. In several occasions, we have also participated in the work of the Human Rights Council through pre-recorded video statements. We have particularly welcomed the introduction of this modality of participation.
- Many NHRIs, particularly in developing countries, have very limited resources – human and material. In addition, the ombudsman-type of NHRIs are usually overwhelmed with the individual complaints. Thus, in addition to our regular domestic reporting, preparation and presentation of the reports to the UN and RHRMs stretches our resources considerably. While all treaty bodies openly embrace any information provided by the NHRIs, only few have developed tailored general comments on their cooperation with NHRIs (Committee on the Rights of the Child and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).
- What we would definitely embrace very much is unified and harmonized approach to cooperation with NHRIs, embodied in both substantive and technical sides of cooperation.
- While we fully recognize the whole specter of possible avenues of co-operation between NHRIs and UN mechanisms in all phases of country review process, I will focus on the reporting, as it is arguably the most comprehensive way of communication. Moreover, it is undeniably the most substantial.

- While there are certainly important differences in the scope of rights covered by the individual treaties, some unified guidelines on NHRIs' reports would be very much welcomed.
- UN and NHRIs have the same goal - protection and promotion of the rights in our respective states. We feed the UN mechanisms with the information from the ground that should help them producing the realistic recommendations to the states. However, what is usually missing is the feedback. We receive very little or none feedback on our reports submitted to the treaty bodies, i.e. what information did they find useful, what information did they seek to get and whether we have delivered it or not, and so on. In other words, we actually don't know what type of information, the treaty bodies members search for. For instance, would they prefer in-depth elaboration on fewer topics or comprehensive reports? Those information would help raising the efficiency of our cooperation, which is our common goal.
- In addition, there is different practice with regard to in-person-meeting during the country review process. Some of TBs invite NHRIs to pre-session meetings - either alone or with NGOs. There are strong and weak sides of both approaches. The same applies to interactive dialogue with the state, as sometimes NHRIs are part of it (i.e. CRPD), and sometimes they are not.
- Finally, we warmly welcome an increased practice of informing the NHRIs on possibilities to engage with TBs by timely e-mails. That is valuable, because it is not always easy to find all necessary information on the OHCHR website.