

Regional Sustainable Development Forum for the UNECE Region

ENNHRI Submission

April 2022

This ENNHRI submission aims to feed into the Report of the Regional Forum 2022. The submission harvest messages formulated by European National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) - ENNHRI members - during the plenary session and roundtables of the 2022 Regional Sustainable Development Forum for the UNECE Region.

ENNHRI proposes that the Report of the Regional Forum 2022:

Underlines that NHRIs are an indicator of SDG 16 and are human rights defenders

NHRIs that comply with the [UN Paris Principles](#) are **an indicator of peaceful, just and inclusive societies under SDG 16** and are **internationally recognised as human rights defenders**. The Paris Principles require states to establish NHRIs by constitution or law as an **independent public authority with a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights for all**.

NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles are globally recognised as **contributing to peaceful, just and inclusive societies**. They also play a key role in conflict and post-conflict contexts as **early-warning mechanisms**.

Advocates that NHRIs have independent participation and speaking rights at UNECE

In UN human rights fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council, NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles **have participation and speaking rights independent from their respective state governments**. This is not yet the case at the UN SDG Regional and Global Fora.

In line with the [UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/156](#), we continue to encourage all UN SDG Regional and Global processes to **enhance the independent participation of NHRIs compliant with the Paris Principles** in its fora. In this regard, we recall **the relevant provisions regarding NHRIs' participation rights** at the UN [Human Rights Council](#) (including the [UPR](#)), as well as their important [human rights contributions](#) to [sustainable development](#) and recovery.

Advocates for human rights and equality to be at the centre of all recovery efforts

Inequality remains a concern that cuts across all 17 SDGs. Even before the onset of COVID-19, European states had struggled to implement their human rights obligations and fell behind in their political commitment under the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) to *leave no one behind*.

European NHRIs [have documented](#) how the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated **human rights gaps and inequalities** in the UNECE region. They have also reviewed **policies in National Recovery and Resilience Plans**, tested them against human rights standards, and **advised European governments to use the Agenda 2030** as guidance when working to ensure sustainable recovery.

ENNHRI and OHCHR have together developed [a checklist](#) for European NHRIs that gives them guidance on how they can help safeguard jobs and livelihoods put under pressure by COVID-19 while upholding human rights.

European states should undertake [human rights and equality impact assessments](#) of their policies and measures. They should collect disaggregated data on discrimination [to monitor progress and develop evidence-based responses to tackle inequalities](#). In line with SDG 17, emerging partnerships between NHRIs and National Statistical Offices should be nurtured and encouraged so that international and national human rights data can fill information and data gaps and better identify groups in need of special protection in the region.

European states must also put **economic and social rights at the centre of its economic recovery** plans. States must use their **maximum available resources** to fully realise these rights as [expeditiously and effectively as possible](#). They must **avoid retrogressing in service standards** and work for [substantive equality](#) by mitigating disproportionate impacts on those most at risk.

Any **economic growth should aim to reduce poverty and inequalities** and stay within planetary boundaries through [triple dividend actions](#), as suggested by the [UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Olivier de Schutter](#). These actions would work across the three dimensions of sustainable development: **reducing our ecological footprint, creating employment**, and **making goods and services available** for low income households. Therefore, sustainable recovery must also contribute to **climate justice, protection of biodiversity**, and the **transition to clean energy**.

Advocates that European states effectively integrate human rights education into national frameworks

[Data](#) collected by the Danish Institute for Human Rights related to SDG 4 has shown that countries in the UNECE region are lagging behind in terms of **effectively integrating human rights education into national frameworks**, particularly with regards to educating teachers and student assessments. In keeping with both their international human rights obligations and commitments under SDG 4.7, **states in the UNECE region must step up efforts to embed human rights in national education systems**. The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated existing patterns of discrimination, fostered increased levels of violence, and stigmatised certain population groups within our societies. This calls for a **renewed emphasis on the integration of human rights education as a key component of the right to education and as a key accelerator of the 2030 Agenda**.

Advocates for meaningful participation of civil society and human rights defenders to *build forward*

To foster trust and sustainable recovery, individuals must have meaningful opportunities to **participate and influence decision-making**. Sustainable recovery must therefore **reverse the trend of restricting democratic space**, enhance accountability, and secure platforms for meaningful participation of civil society and human rights defenders that draw on people's experience and resilience. We must *build forward* and enable more participation.

Outlines Agenda 2030 as a vector to rebuild and contribute to peace in Europe

It goes without saying that human rights and Agenda 2030 can be vehicles for **rebuilding and contributing to peace**. When addressing ongoing conflicts, we need to invest in conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding, while promoting societies free of human rights violations, systemic discrimination, and violence.

Advocates for inclusion of ENNHRI and European NHRIs as partners to ensure that recovery is human rights-based and in line with SDGs

Strong, inclusive and accountable institutions (including NHRIs) as envisaged **under SDG 16** are essential for steering sustainable recovery and ensuring just, peaceful and inclusive societies. European NHRIs strive to ensure that **human rights are not forgotten in these uncertain times**. NHRIs have acted with speed and expertise and advised states **to ensure that no one is left behind**, while **protecting people from further discrimination during the pandemic**. Equally, **NHRIs have provided human rights expertise during conflicts** and/or in peacebuilding

processes through community engagement, mediation, the monitoring of peace agreements, and contributions to transitional justice,

As [the UN Secretary General has stated](#) “there is a well-documented correlation between a society’s enjoyment and commitment to human rights - including non-discrimination, and its resilience to crisis.” ENNHRI and European NHRIs stand ready to support states in ensuring that **post-COVID-19 recovery is human rights-based** and in **line with the 2030 Agenda**, and that our **societies are just, inclusive and peaceful**.

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