

Communiqué

Regional Consultation for National Human Rights Institutions in West Africa, Accra 29-31 May 2019

Accra, 31 May: From 29-31 May 2019, National Human Rights Institutions in West Africa met in Accra during a regional consultation jointly organized by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice of Ghana (CHRAJ), the Network of National Human Rights Institutions in West Africa (NNHRI-WA), ECOWAS Commission, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights-West Africa Regional Office (OHCHR-WARO) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

During three days of consultations, participants drawn from 15 countries shared experiences and lessons learnt in promoting a culture of human rights and the rule of law in the region and identified operational approaches to address current impediments to the full realization of human rights.

While recognizing the support of member states to National Human Rights Institutions and the need for this to be sustained, the participants stressed on the importance for more independence through the strengthening of legal frameworks, operational and financial autonomy in line with the Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles).

Participants underscored the key role of National Human Rights Institutions in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union Agenda 2063 and ECOWAS Vision 2020, based on the Merida and Kigali Declarations on SDGs. They also identified possible entry points in this regard, particularly through collaboration with national entities involved in the development and implementation of national development plans and **the management of statistics**.

Participants committed to strengthen the emphasis on women and children in achieving the SDGs and called for more concerted action to address the human rights challenges linked to migration while highlighting their commitment to mainstream human rights in the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration by their respective states.

Given the fact that a number of countries in the region will be organizing important and high-stake presidential elections in 2020, the participants stressed on the need for the utmost respect of human rights in electoral processes and pledged to assist their respective states and national institutions to promote peaceful, credible and transparent elections. In this regard, participants agreed to closely monitor issues relating to hate speech, gender representation and inclusive participation, militarization of the electoral process, respect of the rule of law as well as to advocate against practices of vote buying. They also committed to engage in national debates relating to constitutional review with the view of including human rights and rule of law standards.

The participants expressed concerns over evolving security threats including violent extremism and terrorism, transnational organized crime, intercommunity violence, conflict between farmers and herders and their spillover effects as well as impact on the safety of the population. They appealed for continued collaboration and partnership in addressing these threats between national authorities, regional and international organizations while recognizing the resilience of the affected communities.

The participants further acknowledged the role of human rights defenders including civil society organizations (CSOs) and paid tribute to those who have fallen in the line of duty while extending their condolences to their respective families.

The participants commended the constructive partnership with and support of ECOWAS, G5 Sahel, OHCHR-WARO and UNOWAS to the work of National Human Rights Institutions.

Finally, they extended their appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Ghana for hosting the consultation and for their hospitality.