

Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund
Steering Committee Dialogue with Donors
Wednesday 7 December 2022, 9:30 – 11:30 NYT (via Teams)
Summary Note

Opening Remarks

1. The Fund Steering Committee (SC) Chair, Craig Mokhiber, presided the meeting and welcomed everyone to the second annual dialogue of the SC with Fund contributors/donors¹. He cited the 25th anniversary of the UN's initiative to mainstream human rights in the UN development system (UNDS), launched by Kofi Annan in 1997, which fundamentally transformed UN development cooperation, particularly the integration of human rights at country level work. He noted the current contradiction of human rights being so challenged around the world and the growing demand for support on human rights for sustainable development among UN country teams (UNCT) and Resident Coordinators (RC) on the one hand, and the Fund's critical funding crisis on the other. He thanked the donors for their participation in the dialogue, for their contributions to the Fund, and for their engagements in strategic discussions around Fund management, the independent evaluation, and the implementation of the management response to the evaluation. He also welcomed and thanked Switzerland, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), as new Fund partner and contributor. The SC Chair outlined the overall purpose of the meeting – to have a systematic dialogue between Fund SC members and current donors, to inform the Fund's strategic directions.

2. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) through Staffan Smedby (Head of Democracy and Human Rights Unit), provided reflections as one of the Fund's partners since its inception. He observed that the promotion and mainstreaming of human rights throughout the UNDS remains as relevant and important as ever given the overall decline of democracies and the increase in autocracies. The Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights and Our Common Agenda to emphasize the centrality of the full spectrum of human rights for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and interagency coordination to further institutionalize human rights in the UNDS as key in systems work for the SDGs. He stressed that the Fund is highly relevant for supporting the UN in strengthening human rights mainstreaming in the field through the application of human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the principle of leave no one behind (LNOB). He shared the feedback and lessons from SIDA's field visits to Southern Africa and Latin America which involved interactions with RCs, UNCTs, national partners and human rights advisers (HRAs). He emphasized here the high appreciation of the work of HRAs, as well as noting the limited awareness amongst UN agencies at country level about the Fund and its potential to contribute further to UNCTs' capacities and further integration of human rights in their work. SIDA sees the potential for even greater value for the UNCTs if the Fund has more resources available. As they prepare for their 2023 assessment for future support to the Fund, SIDA expressed their need for better understanding of the engagement of participating UN organisations in fundraising efforts and acknowledged the need to step up joint efforts in defending and advancing human rights as a matter of duty.

Agenda Item: Overview of Fund progress and results

3. The SC Chair linked the agenda item to the Fund's consolidated annual report² and the new multiyear results framework which outlines the achievements and ambition of the Fund to provide valuable capacity

¹ Fund contributors since opening: Sweden (SIDA), Norway, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland (SDC), Germany, Ireland (Irish Aid)

² Also posted in the MPTFO Partners gateway every 31st of May

<https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/55950%20-%20HRM%20Fund%20Annual%20Report%202021%20-%20W EB%20final%2028may.pdf>

and support to country level work complemented by global level work on system guidance and policy coherence.

4. Highlights of the Fund's progress was presented by the Head of Secretariat, Brianna Harrison, Marcella Favretto (OHCHR representative in the SC) and Sarah Rattray (UNDP representative in the SC). The Secretariat announced that the Fund's 2021 report is now published in [accessible formats](#) and provided the overview of the Fund's operations, its key result areas covering 73 countries with modest financial resources (USD 14 million) in 2021 supporting a diverse range of complementary initiatives implemented through joint UN collaborations focused on RCs and UNCTs. She highlighted the: impact of the HRA programme in terms of HRBA, and integration of human rights norms and standards in the country team analysis, planning and implementation processes; the support for capacity building through self-paced foundational course for all staff, and the in-depth moderated course currently under development (an initiative led by UN Women in partnership with the UN Staff College, UNFPA, UNICEF, OHCHR, ILO and DCO).

Marcella Favretto (OHCHR) announced the forthcoming launch of the interagency practical and operational checklists for integration of HR, LNOB and GEWE in the common country analysis (CCA) and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (CFs). She elaborated on the system resource role of the Surge Initiative (supported by the Fund and augmented by bilateral funds from other donors including Switzerland) in bringing together economists, economic and social rights specialists and development specialists to support the field to more effectively operationalize economic, social and cultural rights and counter inequalities - a priority under Our Common Agenda. The Surge Initiative support facilitated transformation of recommendations from human rights mechanisms into policy solutions through strengthening of, *inter alia*, political economy assessments on social exclusion and social economic policy choices including government budget analysis (e.g., position paper on IMF conditionalities in Tunisia with RCO economist and UNICEF), in CCA and CF processes, and in country projects (in 39 countries) for evidence-based analysis (e.g., social protection study in Timor Leste with ILO).

Sarah Rattray (UNDP) expanded on the complementarity of human rights and SDGs and the partnership implemented by UNDP and OHCHR to strengthen integrated approaches at country level and systemwide strategic engagement with human rights mechanisms and processes to achieve the SDGs. The project assisted 16 countries, which included integrated support for closer collaboration of UNCTs on systems coherence, on data, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Voluntary National Review (VNR) engagements, and technical assistance to and partnerships with NHRIs and national statistical offices for human rights-based approaches to data. She cited some of the key impacts of the project's country level support and thought leadership: Pakistan government strengthened harmonization of data collection and reporting on human rights and SDGs; Sierra Leone national partners developed an integrated implementation and monitoring strategy on human rights and linked to SDG tracking progress; Uruguay created a citizen participation tracker to monitor public opinion on human rights and SDG 16 policy priorities; and the launch of the operational guidance on integrating human rights into the VNR on the side of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). UNDP emphasized that the partnership with OHCHR has also resulted in a proof concept and the partners are ready to implement at scale the dual approach (of country level support and thought leadership).

5. Stephen Jackson, RC in Kenya - guest resource person for this year's dialogue - shared his reflections on the criticality of having the dedicated and field-based support of a HRA and other Fund-supported initiatives. With the support of the HRA, the UNCT in Kenya facilitated a formal partnership agreement (MOU) between the NHRI and National Statistical Office for human rights-based data collection and analysis, which led to Kenya's Leave No One Behind Report (launched and supported by Kenya's President). He also cited the HRA's close work with the Peace and Development Advisor (PDA) for the invigorated Prevention Platform which provides regular situation analysis to the UNCT and supported the overall peaceful transition during Kenya's recent elections, and their work on countering online hate speech (supported by the Peacebuilding Fund). He referenced the Surge Initiative support for Kenya's first human rights-based budget analysis,

focused on key social sectors and the UPR recommendations taken up by the Kenya government. He expressed the wish that all RCs and UNCTs would have access to expert support from the Fund. He recalled that when he was RC in Gabon, he was desperate to have an HRA and he could have done much more to step up in the field if the Fund had more resources. He emphasized that without the Fund and donor partners, we will go backwards from the current steam generated by the convergence of expert support to RCs and UNCTs. He asked donor partners to stay with the Fund and invite their friends to support the Fund's work.

6. During plenary, Helena Fraser (DCO representative in the SC) appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat to be responsive to the field and facilitate the engagement of UN agencies and donors. She underlined that DCO is an incredibly interested party to the Fund since it is a tremendous asset of the UNDS and a critical vehicle for advancing the UNDS reforms vocally championed by Member States. And as former RC, she has seen first-hand how important it is to have interagency human rights advisory capacity to enable RCs and UNCTs to have the space, the resources and the support to exercise principled leadership on human rights that is required to fulfill the promise of the 2030 Agenda. She relayed how the DCO ASG Fernandez-Taranco has been pitching the Fund as a priority alongside the stable resourcing of the RC system. DCO is highly concerned that the Fund is in jeopardy and may potentially close if no additional donors come in or past donors reenergized. She stressed that every RC and UNCT should benefit from in-country human rights advisory capacity as part of the core capacity to support Member States, it is not politically feasible at this time, hence the importance of the Fund.

7. Also in plenary, SIDA recognized the presentations and excellent examples of the Fund work and its important results, which showcased intelligent ways of using the Fund support. SIDA also asked how we can make sure that the Fund's stories reach others to communicate the Fund's value. The SC Chair acknowledged the importance of continued efforts to reach a wider audience. He welcomed guidance from the donor partners on how best to reach and convince the unconverted. Norway shared that their Ministry of Foreign Affairs speaks regularly about the value of this Fund. They asked the RC in Kenya how the results are understood and attributed to the Fund at country level, especially by the community of donors in country. The RC in Kenya promised to mention in future country level events/meetings and engagements with the diplomatic corps that they could not have achieved key results without the Fund, and make the link clearer to help the donor partners strengthen their case to their capitals and neighboring capitals as part of the "bring a friend" approach.

Agenda Item: Funding pipeline and strategic matters

8. The SC Chair recalled the Fund's revitalization efforts as part of the Management Response to the Fund's independent evaluation and strategic positioning to support the UNDS reforms, the Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights and Our Common Agenda. He noted also the multi-pronged resource mobilization efforts of the SC to support the 2022-2025 appeal and the supplemental steps taken to respond to the funding crisis with the support of the SC's Resource Mobilization Working Group (including resource mobilization experts of SC member entities). In 2022 this included, in partnership with donors, the high level event in April 2022, several technical events with Member States, continuing bilateral donor outreach by the SC Chair, Secretariat and SC members, key messages conveyed by SC member entities in relevant events with Member States and the recent briefing by Volker Turk in his new role as High Commissioner for Human Rights. The SC Chair has been personally following up with every MS participant in these events. The Chair also informed the group about the 2022 decision of the UNSDG Core Group to institutionalize annual reporting to the UNSDG on the Fund, and the UNSDG Principals' commitment to raise the Fund's results and resource needs in their engagements with donors and Member States. He also cited the expanded partnerships, including support from the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Area of Human Rights (managed by OHCHR) in providing bridge funding to address critical gaps in

resourcing for the HRA Programme; the ongoing collaboration with the Joint SDG Fund to strengthen integration of human rights in their work and leverage investments in these two pooled funds; and the engagements with the Global Compact on business to explore potential partnerships on human rights integration with the private sector. The SC Chair thanked the donors, in particular SIDA and Norway, for their active support in resource mobilization and raising awareness of the Fund's results and potential. Despite the breadth of these joint efforts, and with the notable and much-appreciated exception of Switzerland, engagements from Member States have not translated into new funding commitments.

9. Jennifer Topping, Executive Director of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) provided data snapshots and insights on trends in pooled funds from 2016 to 2021. She underlined that interagency pooled funds through an MPTF approach are the preferred financial instrument for non-core resources under various reform agenda on the development system, on peacebuilding, and on humanitarian system. Overall, there is a growth trend for interagency pooled fund portfolios, reaching USD3.4B contributions across the system by 2021. PBF has more than 50 contributors, the Joint SDG Fund has 16 contributors. This growth trend is not reflected in the Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund. She concurred with the suggestion from the RC in Kenya that one approach to expanding the contributor base could be for every donor to bring a friend. She also echoed the absolute importance of this Fund, as a former RC.

10. The SC Chair noted that the increase in humanitarian response funding is a reflection of the sad state of the world; the prevention value of human rights in development has not received much attention and investments despite the admonitions of the Secretary General and successive High Commissioners, and the clearest mandate on supporting countries to advance human rights for sustainable development under the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN system operational activities (QCPR). He invited guidance and insights from the Fund's donors on what can be done differently.

11. Norway (Martin Torbergsen and Lena Hasle, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) expressed appreciation of the collaborative work with the Secretariat, OHCHR, and DCO, the importance of donor diversification and raised the tricky part of messaging and reaching out to a diverse and unconverted audience (e.g., elaborate on what could it mean to bring a friend, and micro targeting of some possible partners from development or human rights budgets) given the narrow funding base and political expectations on human rights and SDGs. The SC Chair, ILO and DCO acknowledged the importance of constituency building among Member States and potential donors with dedicated resources (ie., fulltime resource mobilization expert), connecting different stakeholders, highlighting complementarities (eg. of this Fund and the Joint SDG Fund) and emphasizing this bridge-building Fund as "fundable" from all budget pillars (i.e., not be limited to traditional human rights stream but also include development and peace and security streams). UNICEF and DCO supported the need for assessment of the Fund's pitch and its resource mobilization efforts to help in focus and targets of efforts, including key potential partners and capitalization requirements. Current donors could also review their various funding pots to see how other streams could be creatively tapped.

12. SDC (Andreas Weber) shared Switzerland's key motivations in supporting the Fund, including the Swiss commitment to HRBA and the in-country support provided by the Fund. He suggested clarifying the flow of complementary funding streams towards similar types of support and strengthening visibility of the Fund's prevention work and PDA/HRA collaborations. UN Women and UNDP both underlined the value of the Fund's direct link to UNCT structures and CF processes, the importance of interagency collaboration in pooled funding (at country and global levels), and confirmed their respective entity's leadership support for the Fund's fundraising as well as investment of their own capacities/resources in Fund implementation. UNDP and DCO also noted the broader benefit of the Fund's support to UNCTs through leadership and capacity building. The closure of the Fund would mean a great loss to the system, the interagency space and to individual UN entities and members of UNCTs. UNDP underscored that the Fund's support to the successful pilot on linking human rights and SDG processes needs more support for scaling up to reduce transaction costs and be more responsive to the demand for support from UNCTs and Member States.

13. SIDA expressed support for adding dedicated capacity on resource mobilization for the Fund given the urgency of the funding situation. The SC Chair noted the SC is considering this - potentially a secondment from a donor or UN entity, or a consultant. He also referred to his request to RCs with HRAs to become the Fund's ambassadors to communicate its results and work to more Member States. He echoed the DCO suggestions for donors to invite the SC into donor platforms (e.g. EU, Utstein Group), and raise human rights mainstreaming and the Fund in intergovernmental debates to strengthen the visibility and references in the resolutions and reports of the HRC and the General Assembly.

Closing

1. The SC Chair spotlighted the urgency of additional resources given the existential struggles of the Fund. He also expressed gratitude to all participants for their feedback and suggestions on mobilizing support and resources. The dialogue summary will be posted on the MPTFO Partners' Gateway page and the presentations and related documents will be circulated to the partners. The Secretariat will follow up bilaterally regarding specific suggestions and requests.
2. Denmark (Esther Hansen, Counsellor and focal point for the Fund in the Denmark Mission to the UN NY) provided closing reflections. She reiterated thanks to the Fund and the view that human rights in development policy is as important as ever and remains a key priority for Denmark's work globally and at country levels. They recognized the synergies with the Call to Action and the concerns regarding the critical under-resourcing of the Fund. Denmark looks forward to continuing collaboration with the Fund.

Annexes

1. List of Participants

Donors	Delegation
SIDA	Staffan Smedby , Head of Unit for Democracy and Human Rights
	Camilla Redner , Program Officer Specialist; SIDA focal point for OHCHR
	Louise Wahlström , Program Officer Specialist; SIDA focal point for the Fund
Norway	Lena Hasle , Deputy Director, UN Development Activities Department for Multilateral Cooperation, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Martin Hauge Torbergesen , Senior Adviser, Section for HR and Democracy, and Gender Equality; focal point for the Fund and OHCHR
Denmark	Esther Sandholt Hansen , Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations in New York
	Tara Kramhøft (Intern for Legal Affairs)
SDC/Switzerland	Andreas Weber , Policy Advisor Peace, Governance and Equality, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
Germany	Marcus Koll , Counsellor in the Sustainable Development Unit, German Mission to the UN New York
Kenya RC Office (Guest)	<i>Stephen Jackson, Resident Coordinator</i>
	<i>Li Fung, Senior Human Rights Adviser</i>
Steering Committee (SC)	
SC Chair	Craig Mokhiber Director OHCHR New York and Chair of the HRM Fund SC

ILO	Beate Andrees Director New York Office
	Matthieu Cognac Multilateral Cooperation Specialist
OHCHR	Marcella Favretto Chief, Sustainable Development Section, DESIB Branch
UNDP	Sarah Rattray Global Policy for Human Rights Specialist
UNICEF	Manel Stambouli Programme Specialist HRM Fund Technical focal point
	Solome Zemene Public Partnerships Specialist
UN Women	Louise Nylin Chief, Political Analysis and Programme Development Unit
MPTFO	Jennifer Topping Executive Coordinator
	Mari Matsumoto Portfolio Manager
DCO	Helena Fraser Chief, Programme & Policy Branch
	George Abualzulof Senior Human Rights Adviser
Fund Secretariat	Brianna Harrison Human Rights Policy Specialist
	Romina Sta. Clara Programme Specialist

[2. Presentation/slide deck](#)