United Nations General Assembly
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Statement by

Ms. Navi Pillay
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

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Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to present my annual report on the overall work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), from August 2012 to July 2013, and to bring you up to date on important activities since then.

Our work is becoming increasingly action-oriented, as we respond to a steadily-growing number of requests for OHCHR engagement and assistance. As at 1 October this year, OHCHR was supporting 60 field presences; 13 country- and stand-alone offices; 13 OHCHR regional offices and centres; 15 human rights components of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions; and 19 human rights advisers posted with Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams.

The government of Egypt has expressed its willingness to host an OHCHR regional office for North Africa in Cairo and negotiations are under way to establish this presence. Discussions are also on-going with the Government of Myanmar to establish a country office there. In January 2013, the United Nations Development Group agreed to the deployment of 13 additional human rights advisers during the period 2013-2014.

Since submission of my written report on 6 August, the Deputy High Commissioner, the Assistant-Secretary General and I have conducted several missions, including to countries experiencing violence or conflict, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, the Central African Republic, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

Respect for human rights should be at the heart of the UN’s response to conflict, from the very early stages where human rights information is a tool for early warning and prevention. At the request of the Security Council, so far this year we have briefed the Council formally eight times, including on the work of our human rights components of peace missions. Their growing number and the newest human rights component in Mali underline the need for my office to provide quick and solid support to their deployments. This is why I have been working to strengthen and consolidate OHCHR’s peace mission support in New York, and I am very grateful for your support.

OHCHR has continued to provide strong support to the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, as they address human rights issues around the globe. Syria has remained foremost in the Council’s concerns. While much of the world’s recent attention has focused on the use of chemical weapons, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria has continued to catalogue shocking new evidence of the wide range of human rights violations persisting throughout the country. The bloodshed, suffering and litany of international crimes documented by the Commission during its two years of painstaking work, are truly unconscionable.

Last March the Human Rights Council established a Commission of Inquiry to look into human rights violations in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. With the help of my Office, it has been conducting a series of public hearings, and will be reporting to you for the first time this week on the progress it has made so far in its investigation into alleged
human rights violations in the DPRK. I urge the authorities of the DPRK to cooperate with the Commission, including by allowing direct access.

A number of OHCHR fact-finding missions and resulting reports stimulated debate in the Human Rights Council, for example on Mali and Central African Republic. Two government ministers from the CAR joined an interactive discussion in September and the Prime Minister of Somalia participated in an interactive Human Rights Council panel about the plight of human rights victims in his country.

There are currently 51 Special Procedures – a record number. In March 2014, the Council is to appoint 25 new mandate-holders, along with two experts for the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I am concerned by the refusal of some States to cooperate with Special Procedures. I am also alarmed by attacks on the personal integrity of Special Procedures mandate-holders. The job of Special Procedures is not only to identify and report on violations, it is also to engage constructively with the authorities to address and resolve issues. I therefore reiterate my call on all Member States to allow unimpeded visits to their territories.

Another alarming trend is the intimidation and harassment of civil society actors cooperating with the United Nations. Cases of reprisals against human rights defenders are significantly on the rise – including against participants in Human Rights Council sessions. The Council’s resolution on reprisals and decision in September to establish a senior United Nations focal point on this crucial issue sent a particularly strong and welcome message that such behaviour will not be tolerated.

Our support and follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review process has also been unwavering. Over the period covered by my Report, 41 States have undergone the second cycle of UPR, a unique peer-review process between States that is increasingly being recognized as a catalyst for national dialogue and cooperation, a trend we are actively supporting.

During the reporting period, the human rights treaty bodies considered 128 reports. The system also continued to grow as the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – which enables the Committee to receive and consider complaints and to undertake inquiries – entered into force last May.

I would like to commend the co-facilitators of the inter-governmental process, the Permanent Representatives of Indonesia and Iceland, for skilfully steering matters over the course of the past year. The draft substantive text they have already submitted to two readings provides a sound basis for a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the challenges faced by the treaty body system.

I have taken note of the procedural resolution (A/RES/68/3) which extends the inter-governmental process until the first half of February 2014 and hope that a substantive agreement will be reached by this deadline. My office is contributing to the comprehensive and detailed cost assessment requested by 15 November 2013 in this resolution.

Excellencies,

The principled declarations of Vienna universally endorsed the right to development and clearly identified the inextricable link between democracy, development and human
rights. Consequently, we have worked hard to ensure that the new, **post-2015 development agenda** will properly reflect the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals, and will actually advance fundamental human rights.

I see an encouraging groundswell of support for the full integration of human rights into the new agenda. With the report of the UN Task Team on 2015 and the Rio+20 outcome document firmly supportive of implanting human rights into sustainable development, the new Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review adopted by the General Assembly in January emphasized the close kinship between human rights, peace, security and development, and tighter links between the normative and operational activities of the United Nations.

In May, the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons’s report, "A New Global Partnership," called for integrating human rights into the new development framework, strongly emphasizing universality, accountability and equality. In June this year, I wrote an open letter to all member States calling for a human-rights-based post-2015 agenda. And finally, at the special event on the MDGs and the Post-2015 agenda during last month’s high-level GA segment, Member States from all regions expressed their support for integrating human rights into the new agenda, agreeing an outcome document that declared the post-2015 agenda “should promote human rights for all.”

In our efforts against **racial discrimination**, OHCHR on 11 September launched an online database to help States share their experiences of tackling this phenomenon. I urge you to make use of the database, a unique and growing collection of 1,500 documents and contributions from more than 90 countries as a source of advice, legal precedent and know-how.

Racism and discrimination affect all spheres of life. I am therefore delighted that my Office is developing ties with **FIFA and UEFA**, respectively the global and European soccer federations. Just two weeks ago, football legend Michel Platini, President of UEFA and Vice-President of FIFA, addressed the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the **Durban Declaration and Programme of Action** at its 11th session in Geneva. I trust that this cooperation will bear fruit: FIFA and UEFA have access to hundreds of millions of soccer fans worldwide and are powerful allies in the promotion of human rights to a global audience.

To date, more than 150 countries have either abolished the **death penalty** or do not practice it, and we have welcomed ratification by three more States – Bolivia, Latvia and Guinea Bissau – of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This brings the total to 78 ratifications so far, strengthening the movement towards the death penalty’s abolition.

**On women’s rights** I work closely with the newly-appointed head of UN Women on multiple areas of common interest. Through an exchange of letters, signed in July, we have committed our two organizations to aligning messages in our global advocacy and in our inter-agency and intergovernmental work, and we will continue our joint work on the ground to achieve gender equality and safeguard women’s human rights.

Addressing sexual and gender-based violence will also be a priority for my Office in the period 2014-2017. We will continue to promote an approach to sexual violence that is entirely framed in established and ratified norms and principles, including indivisibility, universality and inalienability. And my Office will continue to consider sexual violence and
gender discrimination in its entirety, and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, as long-running and complex human rights phenomena.

On Transitional Justice, final preparations are now underway for the Regional Consultations on Transitional Justice in Africa, from 6 to 8 November in Kampala, organized by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

Helping foster accountability remains a central part of my mandate and activities. It is crucial that those responsible for grave human rights violations and other international crimes be held accountable, and this should be done at all levels, including the most senior. The immunities granted to certain senior State officials must not bar their prosecutions, especially at the international level. Not only has this principle been included in the statutes of different international criminal jurisdictions since Nuremberg, but it has also been noted by this Assembly, in Resolution 95(1), and by the International Court of Justice in a 2002 judgement.

Your Excellencies,

As I speak, migrant women, men and children are dying at the borders of Europe, America, and Australia, and in transit between countries of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Their deaths are neither unpredictable, nor inevitable, and are sometimes the direct result of government policies aimed at exclusion.

I remain shocked and saddened by the latest boat tragedy off the coast of Lampedusa, and welcome the positive reactions of some governments that have focused on paying respect to the dead and finding ways to save lives in the future. I hope that this laudable attitude and approach will be adopted by other Governments which currently concentrate most of their efforts on devising new methods of exclusion.

Every day, in every part of the world, refugees, migrants and other so-called outsiders are physically abused and discriminated against in schools, workplaces and other institutions. I urge all Governments to take concrete actions to rectify violations of migrant workers' rights on the home front, and not just to speak up when their own citizens are affected abroad.

Some in the international community continue to resist the recognition of the human rights of migrants, and even work to prevent the United Nations from assuming its own global responsibilities in this regard. This must end, and that is the message that I brought to the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held here from 3 to 4 October.

We were encouraged that the outcome document of the meeting called for work "towards an effective and inclusive agenda on international migration that . . . respects human rights.” The fact that this Organization adopted a negotiated outcome document addressing the imperative of human rights in migration is satisfying proof that it can meet its responsibilities in this regard.

Last month, the General Assembly organized the first High-level Meeting on Disability and Development. The outcome document of that event duly reaffirmed the human rights approach to persons with disabilities, as codified in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and called for the integration of these rights in the post-2015 agenda. We count on the commitment and support of Member States both in meeting
their individual human rights obligations, and in working together to ensure a post-2015 agenda that includes persons with disabilities, and respects their rights.

Finally, a word on OHCHR’s funding. We welcome the ever-increasing demands placed on my Office, but these are not being matched with new resources. For our part, we will continue to ensure greatest-possible operational efficiency. I count on Member States, for their part, not only to consider increasing overall financial support to our Office, but also to reflect judiciously when establishing new human rights mandates so as to ensure they are always accompanied with the means to enable their proper implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The past year was exceptionally busy, but it was also a year of stock-taking and useful reflection, as my Office celebrated 20 years of steadily-increasing mandates, missions and partnerships since the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in 1993; 20 years of expanding field presence and action on the ground to advance human rights around the world. The track record of achievements by the human rights movement as a whole over these 20 years reveals a constantly expanding body of treaties, institutions, laws, legal precedent and analysis, a wealth of hands-on experience and expertise at national, regional and international levels, and a blossoming global network of civil society organizations and human rights activists who are such essential agents of change.

Excellencies,

Let me now turn to you. I look forward to hearing your views.

Thank you.