



STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2023

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FOREWORD



The adoption of a strategic plan is always a crucial moment in the life of an organization, and it is particularly important for the Centre for Civil and Political Rights as it coincides with our 10th anniversary.

The idea behind the establishment of the Centre was to strengthen the role of civil society in the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) at the international level during state reviews before the Human Rights Committee (HR Committee), and at the national level in the follow-up advocacy work.

During these ten years, the Centre has worked with dozens of civil society organizations in their efforts to investigate and prevent violations of civil and political rights. We have also accompanied human rights defenders in their advocacy work, ensuring that the members of the HR Committee raise their concerns during the constructive dialogue with the States.

Over the years, three key elements have made the Centre's work unique:

I - The **involvement at the national level** to ensure effective engagement before, during and throughout the follow-up State reviews process, not only taking place in Geneva, but also working with stakeholders in the countries. This ensures that the HR Committee's recommendations are really taken into account by the national authorities. Thus, the Centre organized dozens of follow-up visits at the national level, inviting many HR Committee members to continue the dialogue initiated in Geneva with the national authorities.

II – Commitment to an **inclusive approach** is another key element in the success of the Centre's activities. The partnership with human rights defenders is systematically aimed at creating broad coalitions of NGOs, encouraging civil society to speak with one voice. Likewise, this approach is developed in the follow-up phase, bringing together all the actors involved in the implementation of the HR Committee's recommendations: authorities including parliamentarians, the judiciary, national human rights institutions and civil society at large.

III - Finally, the Centre is committed **to long-term engagement** at national level, as changes in public human rights policies aiming at improving the implementation of the ICCPR take time. This is why all the Centre's projects are designed to develop long-term partnerships between national NGOs and other stakeholders. This approach enables us to establish a special relationship both with national NGOs and with the authorities, ensuring concrete impacts in our work.

Our world is experiencing multiple tensions leading to serious human rights violations. More and more States openly threaten to limit the application of civil and political rights.

In the face of this unprecedented decline, the rights guaranteed by the ICCPR must be defended at all costs, as they represent the cornerstone of our civilizations. As guardians of these rights, UN mechanisms must be protected and strengthened with the view to increase genuine engagement with civil society. These challenges make the Centre's role more crucial than ever.

We are proud to introduce this strategic plan, which is the result of a long process led by the Centre team, with the support of the Board. It was formally approved at the General Assembly of the Centre on December 21, 2018.

Victor Rodriguez-Rescia
President, President of the Centre

Patrick Mutzenberg
Director, President of the Centre

THREE KEY PLAYERS NEEDED FOR A REAL CHANGE

It is in this sense that the 2019-2023 strategic plan was developed. It is structured around strategic objectives targeting three key players needed for a real change at the national level:

1. Civil society

Engagement with human rights defenders will continue to be at the heart of the Centre's work in the coming years. **Our long-term support will lead to a comprehensive advocacy approach aiming at improving the protection of civil and political rights.** This advocacy is done, both at international level (HR Committee and other UN Human Rights mechanisms) and at national level.

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2. National authorities

National authorities have the primary responsibility for ensuring the full respect for civil and political rights. **That is why the Centre will continue to work closely with States to ensure they take the necessary measures to fully respect their ICCPR obligations.** Our target is to develop our expertise supporting States that have not yet ratified the ICCPR and to strengthen our cooperation with States in their efforts to implement the HR Committee's recommendations. The inclusive approach that makes the Centre successful needs to be strengthened further in order to **create spaces for constructive dialogue between authorities and civil society actors - initiatives** that have become crucial as safeguards and fundamental freedoms continue to shrink.

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3. UN Treaty Bodies in particular the HR Committee

Finally, our strategic plan provides for even greater collaboration with the UN Treaty Bodies, in particular the HR Committee. **This collaboration aims at enabling them to fully exercise their mandate and address the many challenges of today.** The Centre will continue to bring its expertise to the HR Committee on thematic issues on which we have been committed to for many years, such as the issue of corruption and its negative impact on human rights. In addition, the Centre intends to engage more in the elections' process of the Committee's members in order to strengthen its expertise, geographic diversity and gender equality.

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OUR VISION

A world where the civil and political rights are protected, respected and fulfilled for everyone without discrimination.

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OUR MISSION

To contribute to the implementation of the ICCPR through support to the civil society and through connecting key actors engaged to implement the UN HR Committee recommendations at the national level.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This strategic plan aims at contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in multiple ways.

Some of these are highlighted below:

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen and assist the efforts of civil society for the protection of civil and political rights

It is the core mandate of the Centre to ensure that human rights defenders (HRDs) advocating for the full respect of the civil and political rights at the national level are able to genuinely engage with the UN Human Rights bodies, especially HR Committee, in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 17.6. This engagement has been developed for a decade by the Centre through inclusive national consultations, capacity building to streamline and prioritize the concerns and provide reliable and accurate information to the HR Committee. The Centre is now in position to develop a holistic advocacy process in order ensure that the HR Committee's concerns are feeding other UN Human Rights bodies.



Workshop on ICCPR organised in Beirut - Lebanon prior to the review of the HR Committee - Dec. 2017.

Increase capacity of civil society in effective reporting to the HR Committee



The Centre will continue to increase capacity of civil society from countries scheduled for review by the HR Committee, and support their advocacy efforts in raising concerns to the Committee. In doing so, the Centre encourages civil society to work in coalition and produce *joint civil society reports*. For this purpose, the Centre starts mobilizing civil society actors at the earliest possible stage by providing key information on strategic engagement with the HR Committee.

Facilitate direct interaction between civil society and the HR Committee



The Centre will continue to be the main gateway between civil society and the Committee by coordinating civil society participation in the formal and informal briefings. From priority countries, the Centre will additionally support the travel of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) to Geneva, Switzerland and interaction with Committee members.

Develop more holistic utilisation of UN Human Rights mechanisms by civil society



The Centre will increase capacity and assist efforts of the civil society to *effectively monitor and assess implementation* of all recommendations issued by the HR Committee and to carry out *long-term follow-up activities* at the national level *in order to* bring tangible and sustainable changes on the ground. Other UN HR mechanisms will be more systematically and holistically utilised to enhance implementation of HR Committee recommendations such as through *the reviews of the country concerned by other UN Treaty Bodies and UPR*.

Targets by 2023



CSO and NHRI consultation in Kinshasa - DRC on the follow-up to the recommendations of the HR Committee - Nov. 2018.

1. Organise 24 national consultations in priority countries to support civil society coalitions or networks preparing for the country review by the Committee.
2. Contribute to the drafting and research of 24 joint reports on key ICCPR issues as prioritized by the civil society.
3. Maintain and optimise the online registration system for civil society participation in the session of the HR Committee.
4. Facilitate the participation of 48 HRDs from priority countries in the Committee's review sessions in Geneva, Switzerland.
5. Coordinate civil society participation in the Committee's sessions for all countries under review, including remote participation.
6. Promote follow-up activities of civil society in 24 target countries, including follow-up reports and development of action plans or roadmaps, for long-term and systematic engagement.
7. Produce and submit reports or briefing notes for the review of 12 priority countries by other UN Treaty Bodies or under UPR.

Example of achievements

In 2016-2018, the Centre organized **17 national NGO consultations** (Rwanda, Namibia, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Thailand, Honduras, Madagascar, Swaziland, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Algeria, Liberia, Tajikistan, Vietnam and Lebanon) bringing together **more than 350 HR defenders**. Each consultation resulted in the submission of a report on key ICCPR issues, co-signed by an NGO coalition, contributing to the review by the HR Committee.

During the same period, the Centre also **facilitated the participation of 32 HR defenders** from Namibia, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Honduras, Madagascar, Swaziland, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Lebanon at the HR Committee's sessions and **coordinated the participation of more than 593 HR defenders** from all the countries under review to ensure optimal use of the available time, streamlining NGO concerns and clearly highlighting the key human rights issues for each country under review.



CSO consultation in Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso on the follow-up to the recommendations of the HR Committee - May 2018.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Increase ratification and enhance implementation of ICCPR

As of December 2018, there are still 25 UN Member States which have not become a party to ICCPR yet. Understanding that it is a largely State-driven process, the Centre will continue to assist national efforts and enhance domestic processes to ratify (or accede to) ICCPR. Our recently initiated process in Myanmar in this context will be further reinforced, and replicated in other countries yet to join ICCPR. For countries recently reviewed, the Centre put most of its efforts to ensure that the HR Committee's recommendations are implemented and have an impact on the ground. We are convinced that this can be achieved through raised awareness and deepened understanding of the HR Committee's concerns and a genuine dialogue and constructive engagement with State authorities to find concrete measures for improved implementation in line with SDGs 16, 17.16 and 17.17.



Consultation with the MFA of Myanmar on the ICCPR ratification process - Dec. 2017.



Contribute to the ratification of ICCPR and its two Optional Protocols

Considering that Treaty ratification is a *long-term process that requires a strategic approach, in-depth and constructive engagement* with relevant State actors, the Centre will focus on a limited *number of priority States* and provide *legal expertise and technical advice* to State actors including national *Parliamentarians*. This approach will be combined with *raising awareness* of other stakeholders and production of tools.

Increase the visibility of HR Committee's recommendations at the national and international level



The Centre will continue to carry out various creative activities to raise awareness of the HR Committee's recommendations among national stakeholders. The main component of this activity is the high-level country visits with Committee members, which enables continuation of the dialogue initiated through the review in Geneva. Based on the needs and challenges identified at the national level, the Centre will also facilitate expert meetings, workshops or conferences focusing on relevant issues. Other key components include translation and dissemination of the findings of the Committee; development of awareness raising materials (booklets, posters, video clips) as well as public events, while exploring in partnership with National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) and cooperation with UN Agencies.

Create a space for national dialogue



The Centre will contribute to the initiation or continuation of dialogue *among national stakeholders, including national authorities, NHRIs and civil society, to regularly assess and enhance implementation of the Committee's recommendations*. In doing so, the Centre will be directly involved in the organisation of multilateral meetings and workshops. In countries where such multilateral dialogue is not possible, alternative (potentially bilateral) meetings will be organised, targeting one or some of the stakeholders.

Targets by 2023



Meeting with the Ministry of Justice of Burkina Faso to review the implementation the recommendations of the HR Committee - Sept. 2017.

1. *Initiate or continue long-term engagement with four priority States to ratify ICCPR.*
2. For *all States* under review, produce overview and analysis of the Committee's findings and related follow-up evaluation.
3. For 24 priority States, produce *awareness raising materials* (videos and posters, translation of the Committee's recommendations).
4. Organise high-level country visits to 24 priority countries, with members of the Committee.
5. Organise 24 multi-stakeholder meetings for continuous dialogue on the implementation of HR Committee's recommendations.
6. Provide expertise to stakeholders in 12 target countries, e.g. through workshops or publications, on selected thematic issues related to issues raised by the Committee.
7. Update and further develop our case law database and produce yearbooks on the jurisprudence of the HR Committee.

Example of achievements

The Centre has vast experience in organising high-level country visits with HR Committee members to follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations. In 2016-2018 the Centre organised **18 high-level country visits** (Ecuador, Madagascar, Liberia, Thailand, Democratic Republic of Congo, Swaziland, Benin, Haiti, Namibia, Rwanda, Ghana, Kazakhstan and Jamaica). All of these visits included meetings with high-level national authorities, civil society, national human rights institutions, diplomats and journalists to discuss the implementation of the priority recommendations of the HR Committee. The visits also raised awareness of the HR Committee's recommendations among a larger public. The Centre is the only organization to conduct follow-up visits with members of the HR Committee and more

generally with the conventional mechanisms. The Centre has **successfully organised multi-stakeholder meetings in various countries to promote a dialogue** on the implementation of the HR Committee's recommendations. For example, **in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)**, in cooperation with our national partner COSPE and the NHRI, the Centre facilitated a round table in November 2018 with a HR Committee member, national authorities and institutions such as the Ministry of Justice and other ministries, Prime Minister's Office, Attorney General's Office, Public Prosecutor's Office, Police Division, Correctional Services, Anti-corruption Unit, diplomatic community including the EU and the US Ambassadors, international organisations such as UNDP and civil society representatives.



Roundtable with the CSOs and the national authorities in Lomé - Togo - Feb. 2018.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Contribute to the strengthening of the HR Committee's work

As the central part of the mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of ICCPR, the quality of the work of HR Committee has to be maintained and further strengthened. While the Committee has been itself evolving and developing its work, not much is done in improving the elections process of the Committee members. Spaces and opportunities for civil society to engage and interact with the Committee must also be maintained and further developed to guarantee the quality of the review. The Centre also identified needs for elaboration by the Committee of the thematic issues that are not yet fully addressed or emerging from changing reality on the ground. In this context, initial work was done by the Centre on corruption and the negative impact on the enjoyment of rights enshrined in ICCPR and in accordance to SDGs 16.4, 16.5 and 16.6, and international standards and practices for fair elections in line with the ICCPR and SDG 16.7.



The HR Committee in session at the Palais Wilson - Geneva - March 2018.



Improve the scrutiny and transparency of the elections of HR Committee members

The composition of the HR Committee is a major factor that influences the quality of its work and ultimately its legitimacy. The Centre will promote *increased awareness among stakeholders and reinforced public scrutiny of the election process* to ensure that the principles of independence, competence, *equitable geographical distribution and gender balance as set out in the ICCPR are fully respected. Campaigns and monitoring of the elections will be carried out in close cooperation with the TB-Net.*



Reinforce meaningful civil society participation in the work of HR Committee

The Centre will continue and further develop its long-standing efforts to ensure effective participation of civil society in the work of the Committee, including through utilisation of new communication technologies for interactions between the Committee and HRDs who cannot visit Geneva. Particular efforts need to be made for the *security and protection of HRDs against reprisals. Security concerns and protection against reprisals are a key priority for the Centre. We will reinforce cooperation with the Focal Point on reprisals of the Committee to prevent any risks of reprisals of HRDs once returning at home.*



Contribute to the enrichment of the HR Committee's findings on thematic issues

The Centre will continue to develop a strategic advocacy including trainings and litigation on the issue of corruption and its impact on civil and political rights. A similar approach will be carried on the right to participate in public affairs, which was recently identified by the Centre and its national partners. At the same time, the Centre will continue its work of *mapping other thematic issues that require Committee's attention, creating opportunity for information sharing, discussion and producing practical materials* on the issues further identified.

Targets by 2023

1. Timely disseminate relevant *information* for the elections of the HR Committee members in 2020 and 2022 and scrutinize the elections in close cooperation with TB-Net.
2. Develop *new and secure communication channels* for remote interaction between the Committee and civil society actors.
3. Work closely with the *Rapporteur on the reprisals of the HR Committee* and closely monitor all allegation of reprisals against HRDs having participated in the work of the HR Committee.
4. Develop strategic advocacy work on the thematic issues of "*corruption and its impact on the enjoyment of civil and political rights*" and "*right to participate in public affairs and fair elections*".
5. *Map thematic issues* that require particular attention of the HR Committee and organise meetings with Committee members and other experts to identify needs and possibility for further elaboration.



CSO Briefing organized by the Centre with the Members of the HR Committee - July 2017.

Example of achievements



Participants to the expert meeting on individual complaints organised jointly with the Geneva Academy and the CRDH-Paris II - January 2019.

The Centre has carried out **strategic advocacy to ensure that UN treaty bodies, in particular the HR Committee, are in a better position to address the issue of corruption** and its negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights. To this end, the Centre organised an international conference on human rights and corruption and an expert consultation on the draft of a practitioner guide on corruption and human rights violations, among other advocacy activities with a

particular focus on this thematic. As a result, we have seen **increased attention on the issue of corruption by the HR Committee** and other UN treaty bodies. For example, 75% of the List of Issues and 46% of the Concluding Observations adopted by the HR Committee in 2018 address corruption including bribery, extortion, and other related matters, proving that this issue has become a prominent concern for the HR Committee.

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Successfully implementing the Centre's strategy is dependent upon the following three fundamental elements:

1. Long term engagement with partners and stakeholders

The Centre regards civil society organisations (CSOs) and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), especially those at the local and national levels, as primary partners for its activity towards the realisation of its vision and missions. For the achievement of strategic objectives 2019-2023, the Centre will work closely with CSOs and HRDs and will advocate for the development of inclusive coalitions and networks. Long-term cooperation with CSOs will be a systematic part of our strategies enabling us to engage genuinely for the implementation of the ICCPR. Additionally, the Centre will cooperate with key strategic partners such as TB-Net and its members.



CSO Workshop on the Independence of the Judiciary held in Yangon - Myanmar - June 2017.

The inclusive approach developed by the Centre to reinforce the dialogue at the national level will lead to a systematic engagement with a wide range of actors involved in the promotion and implementation the civil and political rights, including:

- The members of the HR Committee and in particular the Rapporteurs on follow-up;
- The State authorities in charge of implementation of ICCPR and in particular the NMRF
- The Parliamentarians;
- The NHRIs;

Moreover, all the activities carried out by the Centre will be done in close cooperation with the relevant UN Agencies and in particular OHCHR.

2. Visibility and communication

The Centre will improve and explore ways of communication for connecting HRDs and the HR Committee. This will be done in a systematic manner to ensure that HRDs who cannot attend the sessions of the Committee are positioned to raise their voices.

Effective use of new technologies will also enable us to better promote the HR Committee's work of increasing awareness among stakeholders and generate debate and discussions at



Workshop on ICCPR organised in Beirut - Lebanon prior to the review of the HR Committee - Dec. 2017.

the national level. For each country under review by the Committee, the Centre will continue to develop a comprehensive communication strategy to reach national stakeholders through social media, short videos and other audio / visual materials. We will also improve our current website, launch French and Spanish versions and produce advocacy tools.

3. A decentralized and flexible structure

The decentralized structure of the Centre enables us to remain close to our partners working at the national level. Our regional offices in Asia and West Africa allow direct and regular engagement with national stakeholders and at the same time help us to understand the best practices at the regional level that can be replicated. We plan to establish regional offices worldwide with a priority in the CIS, MENA and Latin America. The Geneva office will remain a flexible structure overseeing the organization's work and providing complementary operational support to the regional offices and national partners. It will ensure that the Centre complies with the highest reporting and audit standards.



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