*Check against delivery*

**Human Rights Council**

**40th session, item 10**



**Oral statement by**

**Mr. Morten Kjaerum**

**Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights (VFTC)[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Geneva, 21 March 2019**

**President,**

**Director,**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished representatives of Member and Observer States and of Civil Society**

**Introduction**

**I thank the Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division, Ms. Georgette Gagnon, for her comments today and all the support received from her Division.**

On behalf of Members of the Board of Trustees[[2]](#footnote-2) of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights (VFTC), **I also thank the High Commissioner and her Office for their continuing excellent assistance from the Secretariats of both the VFTC and the UPR Trust Fund.**

The VFTC, the second largest trust fund administered by OHCHR, provides financial support for technical cooperation in implementation of international human rights standards at national level. The members of the VFTC Board also constitute the Board of Trustees of the UPR Trust Fund for Implementation and Technical Assistance.

**In this dual capacity, the Board provides policy advice and guidance on technical cooperation in support to State efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights including the implementation of UPR recommendations.**

The VFTC Board’s report before the Council today **covers its forty-sixth and forty-seventh sessions held in the OHCHR Country Office in Colombia and in the Regional Office for South America in Santiago de Chile**, in April and November 2018 respectively.

**Board session in Colombia**

During the session in Colombia, **the Board got an** excellent opportunity to observe the type of technical cooperation that OHCHR is best placed to offer, based upon the results of its monitoring role. The Board noted the importance of the **complementary role of OHCHR vis-à-vis the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission.** Monitoring, advocacy and technical **advisory role was referred to as “a crucial foundation” for other actors to build on in their various programmes and support services.**

The Office in Colombia has been physically present and covered key areas of the country in a sustained manner for many years, even at very difficult moments. **It has built trust with all institutions through continuous provision of support and by being strategic in the support provided, for example through its work in communities prioritized in view of their exclusion and marginalization. The Board sees this as a good example of what the principle of “leaving no one behind” represents in programming terms on the ground particularly in assisting the victims of human rights violations**.

The Board paid **attention to the way in which OHCHR facilitates the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders with different human rights mechanisms including the UPR and how it supports the follow-up to their work**.

The **vision and foresight** of the office in Colombia, **working in close cooperation with institutions across the country has created an agile Office. It manages to redeploy human resources and technical capacity to areas where the situation might deteriorate or adapt its programmes accordingly.**

**Board session in South America, technical cooperation and human rights frontier issues**

**Excellencies,**

The session in the South America Regional Office in Santiago de Chile illustrated well how the OHCHR presence in South America has built a solid base. It explains the trust enjoyed by the Office across the region, not only by victims and civil society organizations but also by Governments and State institutions.

The Board learned how partners greatly relied on OHCHR Regional Office’s expertise and advice, for example when strengthening their national protection systems. **The Office has provided direction on the human rights dimensions of numerous thematic areas including access to land, the situation of the rights of persons with disabilities, and women’s rights and gender equality in regard to the prevention and investigation of femicides.** On the latter, the Board appreciated how women’s rights and gender inclusiveness were fully integrated in all OHCHR programmes using the network of its human rights advisers.

**The Board found particularly innovative how the Regional Office has enhanced engagement with countries in the region through the complementary use of the two Funds that the Board oversees and the treaty body capacity building programme.** That provides the opportunity to strengthen the human rights capacities of United Nations country teams through the deployment of national human rights advisers.

**The Board has stressed before, the importance for Member States to support fully a robust enhancement of the OHCHR regional presences** through an expansion of its funding to be able to make full use of its thematic technical expertise.

**Excellencies,**

**During the session in Santiago de Chile the Board decided to take the opportunity of the new OHCHR’s Organizational Management Plan 2018-2021to explore ways to enhance technical cooperation in the areas identified as frontier issues**.

The Board **started with the human rights dimensions of corruption**, **with particular emphasis on its impact on State duty to respect, protect and fulfil economic, civil, social, political and cultural rights**. In our view and that of the partners with whom we met, the **OHCHR technical support is very much needed in this area. It is in particular critical in relation to the impact that corruption has on the realization of the commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. Particular attention should be paid to its gender dimensions.

**The Board was pleased that the two OHCHR Regional Offices are already working closely with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on the impact of corruption on human rights.** This is positive in relation to the specific issue as well as it being a good practice to join up regional and international organisations.

**A change in the way corruption is perceived and dealt with is crucial** and OHCHR can play a key role through its analysis capacity and its technical cooperation. **A bottom-up approach in the fight against corruption based on human rights must be developed to strengthen popular understanding and support in this endeavour and to empower victims and make them visible**. The link between human rights and the fight against corruption should be more systematically included in human rights programmes at all levels. The Office is being pioneering in analysing also the impact and opportunities that new technologies are posing in this field.

**The Board is of the view that currently efforts should focus on maximizing the use of existing human rights instruments to support prevention efforts and to address the effects of corruption.** The Board will continue supporting the Office in furthering its approach to technical cooperation in this and other critical frontier issues.

Excellencies,

**The Board continued this year elaborating on the principles for effective technical cooperation in its annual report. This year the Board stresses that to be effective, technical cooperation in the field of human rights should be mainstreamed throughout the work of all United Nations programmes and operations in each country and region.** The Board encourages Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams to ensure that clustered human rights mechanisms’ recommendations are integrated in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and become part of the SDG implementation efforts. The UPR recommendations for example provide entry points to interphase human rights national efforts into the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda implementation plans.

**Excellencies;**

**Debates in the Council under Item 10 demonstrate the increased willingness from States to publicly acknowledge the important technical support received from the Office and from the entire United Nations even in complex situations. The recent requests for increased presences are again a proof of the importance of having the expertise of the Office closer to the realities on the ground, a must to build solid partnerships.**

**The Board is very pleased with the slight increase in voluntary contributions in 2018 and congratulates states and the Office for this effort. All the partners with whom the Board met confirmed the need for still increased financial resources in particular to strengthen the predictability and sustainability of such funds. This will serve not only to expand presence and support on the ground but ensuring the long term engagement required to achieve real change as it’s the case for other agencies and programmes of the UN.**

**The Board looks forward to the panel discussion in June focusing on human rights of older persons and to continue contributing to advance the human rights agenda.**

**Thank you**

1. In relation to the presentation of the Annual Report of the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, A/HRC/40/78 of 31 January 2019 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Board’s members appointed by the Secretary General from the five geographic regions are Mr. Morten Kjaerum (Denmark and current Chairperson); Ms. Esi Sutherland-Addy (Ghana), Ms. Lin Lim (Malaysia); Ms. Valeriya Lutkovska (Ukraine); and Ms. Carmen Rosa Villa who was appointed in July 2018 to fill the seat vacated by Ms. Mariclaire Acosta from Mexico. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)