**Expert meeting on enhancing capacity-building for local governments to incorporate human rights into all their work**

**Closing remarks by Ms. Peggy Hicks, Director, TESPRDD, OHCHR**

**28 August 2023**

**16:45-17:00 CET, Room XIX, Palais des Nations**

**Draft**

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

It is a privilege to join you for the closing session of this meeting. I am here on behalf of the Deputy High Commissioner, who asked me to extend her highest appreciation to you.

I would like to thank you all for the enriching discussions we have had today, which will inform OHCHR’s summary report of this meeting that will be submitted to the 56th session of the Human Rights Council next year.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the Permanent Missions of the Republic of Korea, Romania, Chile and Egypt, for their crucial leadership in advancing discussions on local government and human rights in the context of the Human Rights Council.

This meeting was a vital opportunity to exchange views and share good practices to enhance the capacities of local governments in promoting human rights and engaging more effectively with the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

Local governments, with their intimate knowledge of their communities, are uniquely positioned to protect and promote human rights. From housing and health services to education and food security, their proximity to the ground enables them to tailor interventions that are not only effective but also deeply resonant.

Throughout the meeting, we heard from cities and municipalities, including Gwangju in the Republic of Korea, Bogota in Colombiaand Canelones in Uruguay, about their efforts to implement and integrate human rights at the local level.

From these discussions, it is clear that local governments have a crucial role to play in the implementation of State’s human rights obligations and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

As the examples shared by our panellists and participants illustrate, involving all levels of governance can lead to transformative policies and innovative solutions for translating global aspirations into concrete realities at the local level.

We also heard about the important role that local governments can play in countering rollbacks of women’s rights and gender equality.

Partnerships with local and national human rights institutions, the academic community and civil society are critical to the development of Human Rights Cities and help to ensure accountability and the sustained impact of these initiatives.

Our discussions have also highlighted the importance for cities and local governments to bring their local-level expertise and experiences to international human rights fora. We have heard about local authorities engaging with the Special Procedures, particularly during country visits, and involving themselves in State preparations for and delegations to the Universal Periodic Review and treaty bodies.

By engaging with these mechanisms, local governments can also benefit from guidance, advice, and good practices to align their laws, policies and practices with international human rights standards.

While promising practices exist to build the capacities of local governments to embed human rights into their work, challenges remain. Our esteemed panellists and participants have shed light on the obstacles faced by local governments as well as on their capacity-building needs. A range of measures have been suggested to further strengthen the capacities of local authorities.

Our Office stands ready to support these endeavours by providing technical assistance, sharing good practices, and facilitating knowledge exchange among local governments worldwide. We recognize the pivotal role of local authorities in driving human rights at the community level, and we are committed to fostering deeper collaboration between local and global actors to advance human rights where it matters most – in people’s daily lives.

In closing, I would like to once again, thank our panellists and participants for sharing their insights, experiences and advice.