

Glossary Human Rights

Aso Rock Commonwealth Declaration on Development and Democracy: Partnerships for Peace and Prosperity: As well as a more general commitment to human rights, this declaration includes a list of specific objectives to be promoted, including machinery to protect human rights and the right to information.

Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG): This is made up of a rotating group of Foreign Ministers who look into "serious or persistent violations of the principles" contained in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: An association that conducts a number of activities aimed primarily at Members of Parliaments, legislatures and parliamentary officials. The Association, with a total membership nearing 15,000 parliamentarians promotes democracy, good governance and human rights.

Commonwealth Secretariat: The main intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth.

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: This convention, developed by the Council of Europe, entered into force in 1953 and has 45 ratifications. It focuses on civil and political rights.

Coolum Declaration: This declaration includes a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, good governance, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights, as well as respect for diversity, and work to eliminate poverty.

African Union (AU): An organization that originated as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) established in 1963. The OAU evolved into the AU in 1999, which aims to take a stronger role both on the continent and internationally, focusing on economic integration and social development as a means to political unity.

Declaration of Commonwealth Principles (1971): This outlines the set of principles that bring together Commonwealth member states. These include the liberty of the individual and equal rights for all citizens, recognition of the need to act to bring about a more equitable society and a commitment "to foster human equality and dignity everywhere, and to further the principles of self-determination and non-racialism".

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): This group coordinates the work of UN specialized agencies and other bodies, and makes policy recommendations. Part of ECOSOC's area of responsibility is to encourage universal respect for human rights, particularly through its subsidiary bodies.

European Union (EU): The main regional body for Europe that is made up of five main institutions: the European Parliament (elected by the people of the member states); the Council of the European Union (representing the governments of the member states); the European Commission (the general Secretariat of the EU); the Court of Justice (which ensures compliance with the law); and the Court of Auditors (which

oversees the EU budget). These are supported by other bodies, including those with a specific mandate related to human rights.

Fancourt Declaration on Globalization and People-Centered Development: This expresses concern that while globalization can offer benefits for wealth creation and human development, the benefits are not shared equally.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): This organization works on nutrition and standards of living, agricultural productivity, and conditions for rural people including issues of rights.

General Assembly: An organization that is the equivalent of a parliament for the UN. It is important to human rights as it can discuss violations, pass resolutions and establish bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The General Assembly also adopts documents that become the human rights standards.

Harare Declaration: The declaration that reaffirms Commonwealth principles originally set down in 1971 in the Singapore Declaration. It makes a robust stand against terrorism, promises to pursue measures to make the equality of women and their full participation in public life a reality, made specific decisions related to the promotion of sustainable development, and stresses on the promotion of democracy.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: Established in 1960, this commission investigates themes of human rights concern as well as individuals' complaints of violations

International Court of Justice: This institution was set up in 1945 under the UN Charter as a world court. It settles disputes submitted by States in accordance with international law and also gives legal advice to authorized agencies.

International Labor Organization (ILO): This organization focuses on labor issues and has adopted over 150 labor conventions which are the basis of international labor standards and can be ratified by ILO member states.

Lusaka Declaration on Racism (1979): This is the main Commonwealth statement against all forms of racism, including the right to live freely in dignity and equality, the right to equality before the law, the right to remedies and protection against discrimination, and freedom of cultural diversity.

Optional Protocol: An agreement that came into force in 2000 that allows investigations into individual cases as long as they relate to a country that has agreed to the Optional Protocol.

Organization of American States (OAS): Established in 1948 by the Charter of the Organization of American States as the main regional body including North, South and Central America, this organization is responsible for the overall development and oversight of regional human rights standards and mechanisms and has established bodies for this specific purpose.

Paris Principles: A basic set of internationally recognize standards that provide the bare minimum for the establishment and operation of National Human Rights Institutions, including: independent through a guaranteed statute or constitution; autonomy from government; pluralism and diversity; broad mandates based on universal human rights standards; adequate powers of investigation; and sufficient resources to carry out their functions.

Pillars of good governance: The pillars of good governance include: transparency in decision-making processes, public participation, responsible exercise of power, accountability of decision-makers and responsiveness to people's needs to uphold the sustainable democracy.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: A country-led, country-written document that provides the basis for assistance from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative. A Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper describes a country's macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and programs to promote growth. It summarizes the country's objectives, policies, and measures for poverty reduction. A Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper should be country-driven, comprehensive in scope, partnership-oriented, and participatory.

Principles of Human Rights: The notion that human rights apply equally to all people, no matter their religion, race, nationality or socio-economic status; that they are interrelated and indivisible; and that they are inalienable, which means that these rights are innate to all human beings and cannot be exchanged for something else or traded away.

Security Council: This is key UN body passes state-building resolutions related to human rights, such as the establishment of the International Criminal Court, and the establishment of special tribunals to deal with heinous violations.

UN Charter: The constitution of the United Nations which was signed at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco on June 26, 1945 by the 50 original member countries. It entered into force on October 24, 1945, after being ratified by the five founding members—the Republic of China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and a majority of the other signatories.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): This program is mandated by the UN General Assembly to advocate for the rights of children. It is guided by the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and is also involved in monitoring the Convention.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP): This program works to help develop the capacities required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which includes the integration of human rights with sustainable development.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): This UN organization promotes collaboration among nations through education, science and culture, which includes some work aimed at the promotion of human rights. Its Committee on Conventions and Recommendations receives complaints from groups or

individuals about human rights violations in the educational, scientific, and cultural or information fields committed in member states.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): This is the agency mandated to assist refugees as per the requirements of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Universal declaration of human rights: A declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly 10 December 1948 in Paris. It consists of 30 articles which outline the view of the United Nations on human rights guaranteed to all people.

World Health Organization (WHO): This group aims to help all people attain the highest possible level of health, and includes work on human rights.