

Regional Sustainable Development Forum for the UNECE Region

ENNHRI Submission

Underline that NHRIs are SDG 16 indicator and human rights defenders

NHRIs that comply with the [UN Paris Principles](#) are **an indicator of peaceful, just and inclusive societies under SDG 16** and are internationally **recognised as human rights defenders**. The Paris Principles require states to establish NHRIs by law, as the **independent public authority with a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights for all**.

NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles are globally recognised to **contribute to peaceful, just and inclusive societies** and [play a key role in conflict and post-conflict contexts as early-warning mechanisms](#).

The number of NHRIs accredited by reference to the UN Paris Principles **has risen significantly since 2015 in Europe**. This number has increased by 46%, from 26 to 37 European countries with an accredited NHRI. Among these, the number of European countries with an A-status NHRI (fully compliant with the Paris Principles) increased by 50% in this period, from 20 to 30 A-status NHRIs in European countries.

Ensure that NHRIs' have independent participation and speaking rights at UN ECE

In UN human rights fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council, NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles **have participation and speaking rights independent from the state government**. This is not yet the case at the UN SDG Regional and Global Fora.

In line with the [UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/156](#) we continue to encourage all UN SDG Regional and Global processes to **enhance the independent participation of NHRIs compliant with the Paris Principles**, in its fora. In this regard, we recall **the relevant provisions regarding NHRIs' participation rights** at the UN [Human Rights Council](#) (including the [UPR](#)), and their important [human rights contributions](#) to [sustainable development](#) and recovery.

Ensure that human rights and equality are in the centre of all recovery efforts

Between 2006-2020, the **SDG target with the largest number of related UN human rights mechanism recommendations in the UNECE region, was [SDG Target 10.3](#)** (Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including through eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and actions in this regard). **Inequality remains a concern that cuts across all 17 SDGs.** Even before the onset of Covid-19, the region was behind in both its human rights obligations and its political commitment to leave no one behind under [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

[The UN Secretary General highlighted](#) that the 2030 Agenda, underpinned by **human rights**, provides a comprehensive **guidance for sustainable recovery from the pandemic**. In our efforts to *build back better*, we recommend the states to acknowledge equality as one of the key enablers and accelerators of progress and also *build back more equal*.

States should undertake **[human rights and equality impact assessments](#)** of their policies and measures. They should collect **[disaggregated data](#)** based on prohibited grounds of discrimination that allow us to understand and monitor progress and develop evidence-based responses to inequalities in access to health service, social security, employment or food security, among others.

Europe must also put **economic and social rights at the centre of its economic recovery** plans. States must use their maximum available resources to fully realize these rights as expeditiously and effectively as possible. They must avoid retrogressing in service standards and work for substantive equality by mitigating disproportionate impacts on those most at risk.

Any **economic growth should aim to reduce poverty and inequalities** and stay within planetary boundaries through, as suggested by the [UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Olivier de Schutter **triple dividend actions**](#). These actions would work across the three dimensions of sustainable development: **reducing ecological footprint, creating employment, and making goods and services available** for low income households. Sustainable recovery must thus also contribute to **climate justice, protection of biodiversity, and transition to clean energy**.

Ensure that strong, inclusive and accountable institutions steer sustainable recovery

Strong, inclusive and accountable institutions, including NHRIs, as envisaged under SDG 16, are also essential for steering sustainable recovery. We, European NHRIs, have pointed to the **absence of clarity and predictability of a number [of emergency measures introduced](#)**

[following the outset of the pandemic](#) which have impacted on all set of human and fundamental rights.

Support meaningful participation of civil society and human rights defenders to *build forward*

To foster trust and sustainable recovery, individuals must have a meaningful opportunity to **participate and influence decision-making**. Sustainable recovery must therefore **reverse the trend of restricting the space for civil society and human rights defenders**, enhance accountability, and secure platforms for meaningful participation that draw on people's experience and resilience. We must *build forward* and more enabling.

Include ENNHRI and European NHRIs as partners to ensure that recovery is human rights-based and in line with SDGs

European [NHRIs have documented](#) the way the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated **existing human rights gaps and inequalities** in the UNECE region. [The health and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic](#) has been disproportionately felt by people who even before the pandemic were left behind; facing inequalities and intersectional discrimination in the region, such as Roma, people with disabilities, people living in poverty, [refugees, and migrants](#).

Given our experience, European NHRIs stand ready to support states in ensuring that **post-COVID-19 recovery is human rights-based** and in **line with the 2030 Agenda**. We are ready to bring our expertise to the **preparation of recovery plans** and to **conduct human rights impact assessments** of states' legislative, policy and budgetary measures post Covid-19.

As [the UN Secretary General has stated](#) "there is a well-documented correlation between a society's enjoyment and commitment to human rights- including non-discrimination, and its resilience to crisis". ENNHRI and European **NHRIs are ready to strive to make sustainable recovery built on human rights and the 2030 Agenda more of a reality for all** in the UNECE region.

24 March 2020