

High Commissioner for Human Rights aimed at assisting governments, at their request, in promoting and protecting human rights at the national and regional levels. In particular, assistance is provided on incorporating international human rights standards in national laws, policies and practices and building national capacity and regional structures for the promotion and protection of all human rights, democracy and the rule of law. All assistance provided by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) under the technical cooperation programme is based on the international standards contained in the human rights instruments adopted by the UN and on international practice in applying those standards in all regions of the world. Programme activities are carried out within the context of national development objectives and coordinated UN system assistance in support of those objectives.

The programme offers a wide range of human rights assistance including: the creation and strengthening of national human rights institutions; human rights training and support to parliament, the judiciary, and police, military and prison officials; constitutional assistance; legislative reform and the administration of justice; the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions; the human rights aspects of free and fair elections; the promotion of human rights education, including curriculum development; and support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society institutions. Expert advice and assistance is also available for specific human rights issues, such as the formulation and implementation of comprehensive human rights national plans of action; compensating victims of human rights abuses; and assisting with projects relating to economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. Assistance may take the form of expertise, advisory services, training courses, workshops and seminars, fellowships, grants and the provision of information and documentation. In carrying out technical cooperation activities, OHCHR draws upon a roster of experts having specialized knowledge and experience in key areas addressed under the programme. The expertise developed among staff members is also used to implement technical cooperation activities.

The report notes that the High Commissioner has established that the programme should focus on countries or regions in transition to democracy. Priority is also given to technical cooperation projects responding to the needs of less developed countries. Other important factors determining possible programmes of technical cooperation are: specific recommendations made by the UN human rights treaty bodies; recommendations by the Commission on Human Rights and its mechanisms, including the representatives of the Secretary-General, the special rapporteurs on thematic or country situations and the various working groups; the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights (established by Commission resolution 1987/38); and the views expressed by national human rights institutions and national and international NGOs. The report

also notes that it is the policy of the High Commissioner that all assistance provided under the technical cooperation programme must be carried out in close coordination with other UN bodies and agencies. In every case, the focus is on coordinated national capacity building, aimed at sustained development progress and the eventual obsolescence of external assistance.

The total expenditure for technical cooperation in 1997 was US\$7.8 million, of which US\$2.2 million was financed through the UN regular budget and US\$5.6 million was financed through the Voluntary Fund. As of 31 December 1997, a total of 53 projects were either being implemented or had been approved and were scheduled to begin in 1998.

Under the new structure of the OHCHR, which became effective as of 1 February 1998, the Advisory Services and Field Activities Methodology Team has overall responsibility for the technical cooperation programme in the Activities and Programmes Branch. The team has responsibility for ensuring: the effective management of the Voluntary Fund; staff capacity for managing the technical cooperation project cycle for all ongoing and pipeline projects in a timely manner; the application of effective policy and procedures for technical cooperation; that policy based on transparent criteria is applied in the consideration of new requests for technical cooperation assistance; and the implementation of the Human Rights Fellowship Programme and all global and interregional projects. The team also has overall responsibility for effective support for human rights field presences, including guidance and support for technical cooperation activities which are implemented by OHCHR field offices.

The report recalls that both the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights have recently requested the High Commissioner to accord priority to the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions. The post of Special Adviser on National Institutions, Regional Arrangements and Preventive Strategies to the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been established and OHCHR activities in support of national institutions can be broadly divided into two areas: the provision of practical advice and assistance to those involved in the establishment of new national institutions or the strengthening of existing ones; and facilitating international and regional meetings of national institutions.

The report notes that, in most cases, the OHCHR responds to a government's request for assistance by conducting an assessment of the country's particular needs, priorities and capacities in the field of human rights. The subsequent report provides the framework for developing possible future technical cooperation activities to strengthen national efforts in identified areas and contribute to the achievement of national objectives, ensures coordination with existing or planned assistance from other donors and sometimes facilitates additional support from other international sources. In 1997: (a) needs assessment missions were undertaken in