

commissions, ombuds, etc. The operating principles of successful national human rights mechanisms include issues such as independence, adequate resources, accessibility, and remedial powers. These are all applicable to UN operations. Similarly, lessons can be drawn from multilateral bodies such as the European Human Rights Commission and Court. Together they have developed particularly strong skills in fact-finding and on-site visits, as well as the need to understand the particular country and the issues being examined so as to avoid superficial assessments and incorrect conclusions.

Recommendation #53

It is recommended that the UN develop standing operating procedures (SOPs) for UN field operations in all aspects of human rights monitoring including witnessing, investigating, recording, and reporting.

However, there is a need for caution in standardizing monitoring procedures at the expense of sufficient operational flexibility to meet the demands of particular situations. This of course applies to all operational aspects of HROs and human rights activity by the larger UN operation. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that merely the knowledge of international human rights law or human rights procedures is insufficient in the absence of common sense and intuitiveness on how to proceed in complex situations. The often complex and always dynamic human nature component of effective human rights activity make its essential that human rights field professionals retain sufficient flexibility to alter standard procedures when and as required. The SOPs themselves must incorporate sufficient flexibility for human rights field operators to vary those SOPs when and as necessary.

Also, SOPs and other mechanisms to enhance field cooperation or coordination, as with any human endeavour, are not sufficient in themselves. They are dependent on the "establishment of good working relations based on a commitment to cooperate and coordinate in order to avoid inefficiency and duplication". This works best where it has been built upon a "clear division of labour based on comparative advantages."¹⁸⁰ All of this invariably proceeds from professionalism on the part of all concerned, and like all professionals they inevitably require training.

¹⁸⁰ p.26 conclusions and recommendations of the working group on protecting human rights: monitoring and reporting, in the report on the International Round Table on Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Austrian Foreign Ministry, op.cit.