

Executive Summary
25th Annual Meeting of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
(GANHRI)

The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) held its 25th Annual Meeting from March 10 to 12, 2025, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The event brought together over 300 participants, including representatives from National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), United Nations bodies, and civil society organizations.

The delegation from the Council participated under the leadership of Ambassador Moushira Khattab, President of the Council, accompanied by Ambassador Dr. Mahmoud Karem, Vice President of the Council, and Dr. Islam Rehan, researcher at the General Secretariat.

The meetings and events included the following:

- GANHRI General Assembly Meeting
- Regional Networks Meeting of National Human Rights Institutions
- GANHRI Annual Conference with the theme of: *"Human Rights of Women and Girls and Promoting Gender Equality: The Role of National Human Rights Institutions"*
- Experience-sharing sessions among NHRIs:
 - Session One: Persons with Disabilities
 - Session Two: NHRI Accreditation Process
- Side Events

The main outcomes of the meetings can be summarized as follows:

General Assembly and Executive Committee Meetings:

- The meeting began with a moment of silence in honor of Mr. Rifaat Saleha, Director of the Gaza Office of the Independent Commission for Human Rights in Palestine, who was martyred along with his family following an Israeli airstrike, and Ms. Roseline Odede, President of the National Human Rights Institution of Kenya.
- The General Assembly addressed organizational matters, approved the financial auditor's report for GANHRI's 2024 budget, reviewed past activities, and set the strategic direction for the coming year, in coordination with strategic partners including the European Union and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- Ms. Amina Bouayach, President of the National Human Rights Institution of the Kingdom of Morocco, was elected as the new GANHRI Chair, succeeding Ms. Maryam Al Attiyah, President of the NHRI of Qatar. Ms. Alyson Kilpatrick, President of the NHRI of Northern Ireland, was elected as Secretary-General for a three-year term.

Annual Conference on Gender Equality:

- The 2025 Annual Conference of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) focused on the theme “*Human Rights of Women and Girls: Advancing Gender Equality.*” The event featured high-level participation, including remarks by the outgoing GANHRI Chair, Ms. Maryam Al Attiyah, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk), as well as speeches by Mr. Jürg Lauber, President of the Human Rights Council, and Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. Additional contributions came from representatives of UN Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, and civil society organizations.
- The conference addressed a range of key issues, including combating gender-based violence, advancing legal reforms, challenging stereotypes through education, and strengthening institutional frameworks that support the integration of gender perspectives.

The discussions highlighted several pressing challenges facing human rights protection, including:

- **Inadequate alignment of national public policies with human rights principles:** Many public policies lack integration with core human rights standards, leading to the exclusion of certain groups from equitable access to services. For example, some social protection programs fail to adequately reach the most vulnerable populations.
- **Weak inter-agency coordination within government:** The absence of effective coordination mechanisms leads to policy implementation gaps, duplication of efforts, and jurisdictional conflicts—directly impacting the quality of essential services such as healthcare and education.
- **Lack or weakness of social accountability mechanisms:** Contributions emphasized limited civil society participation in evaluating public policy effectiveness, as well as underutilized or ineffective complaints mechanisms, which undermines public trust in executive institutions.
- **Slow progress in aligning national legislation with Egypt’s international obligations:** Many outdated or incompatible laws remain in force, such as the Labor Law and laws related to trade union rights.
- **Excessive centralization in planning and decision-making processes.**
- **Limited application of participatory decision-making principles.**
- **Lack of sustainability in certain programs and policies:** Participants noted that some initiatives are launched with temporary funding and lack clear plans for sustainability or scaling up, limiting their long-term impact.
- The conference concluded with the adoption of a **Final Statement**, which reaffirmed the importance of addressing setbacks in the field of women’s and girls’ rights, strengthening accountability mechanisms through national human rights institutions, and fulfilling international human rights obligations, including those under the “Amman Declaration.”

Interventions by the Council Delegation

- Both Ambassador Dr. Moushira Khattab, President of the Council, and Ambassador Dr. Mahmoud Karem, Vice President of the Council, delivered interventions during the conference sessions.
- Ambassador Khattab began by expressing her support for the statements made by previous speakers. She reiterated the delegation's firm commitment to the principle of the rule of law, emphasizing that it remains the cornerstone for protecting the rights of women and girls. She highlighted that this principle is increasingly challenged by modern issues such as climate change, cyberspace threats, and armed conflicts—especially ongoing conflicts in regions like Ukraine and the Middle East.
- She expressed profound sorrow for the suffering endured by women and girls in Palestine, stressing that these grave challenges cannot be ignored and are a source of deep concern in these difficult times. Ambassador Khattab underscored the need to intensify efforts—particularly within this forum in Geneva—to ensure that women and girls can fully enjoy their rights and continue their work. She emphasized that this is the foremost challenge facing the international community, yet it often lacks sufficient attention.
- In concluding her speech, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of the United Nations' Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, describing it as a powerful instrument of support for women. She stressed the need for close cooperation with the UN Security Council in implementing this agenda, alongside relevant mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that the Security Council remains central to these efforts, in coordination with the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and all other stakeholders.
- In his intervention, Ambassador Dr. Mahmoud Karem focused on the critical role of women in conflict and post-conflict settings. He emphasized that women's roles are not limited to peacebuilding but also extend to peace-making and peacekeeping. He noted that women have already joined UN peacekeeping forces and stressed that the noble goals discussed—such as education, women's empowerment, gender equality, and public awareness—deserve full support. He affirmed Egypt's strong commitment to these goals.
- The Ambassador expressed deep sorrow over the fact that such aspirations remain unrealized in an ongoing conflict unfolding close to Egypt—one that is targeting a place deeply cherished by Egyptians and Arabs alike: Palestine, particularly Gaza and the West Bank.
- Ambassador Karem praised Palestinian women for offering a unique and unmatched model of resilience in their struggle for freedom, survival, and family defense. He noted that women have been the most affected by this conflict, with the highest casualty rates recorded among them.
- At the end, the Ambassador addressed a question to the representative of Palestine, inquiring whether she could shed light on the efforts made to monitor, document, and measure the violations experienced by women in this context.

- **Knowledge Exchange Sessions:**

Two main knowledge exchange sessions were organized:

- **First Knowledge Exchange Session: Promoting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

- Participants reviewed innovative national experiences related to monitoring and advancing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Ambassador Dr. Mahmoud Karem contributed an intervention focusing on the institutional landscape in some countries, where two bodies may address the same issue: one being the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), which handles general rights of persons with disabilities, and the other a specialized organization solely focused on disability issues. He emphasized the need for strong coordination and integration between the two entities—something Egypt has successfully achieved through a robust and effective collaboration led by Ambassador Hoda, which has had a positive impact on joint efforts.
- Regarding the role of NHRIs in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, Ambassador Karem highlighted several important initiatives, including support for political participation through the launch of national documents ensuring the right to run for office, vote, and engage actively—not only within political parties or government positions but also in elected bodies.
- He also referenced the Council’s efforts to promote financial inclusion for persons with disabilities. This includes collaboration with the Central Bank of Egypt to improve their access to banking services, increase the number of branches equipped to meet their needs, and raise awareness through targeted training and public information campaigns to foster a rights-based culture.
- Ambassador Karem stressed the importance of government cooperation, citing coordination with the Ministry of Finance to integrate persons with disabilities into the labor market and align national legislation with their rights. He also noted ongoing efforts to issue a unified and comprehensive identity card for approximately 13 million persons with disabilities in Egypt, granting them access to all services.
- In closing, he acknowledged the persistence of key challenges, particularly in relation to monitoring implementation mechanisms at the national level, the lack of accurate statistics, and bureaucratic hurdles that hinder access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and public transportation.

- **Second Knowledge Exchange Session: Strengthening the Accreditation Process within GANHRI:**

- This session focused on strategies to enhance the accreditation process for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), ensuring their effective performance in responding to contemporary challenges in the human rights field. Discussions centered on the significance of accreditation and its pivotal role in upholding the independence and credibility of NHRIs. The session also highlighted the role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Secretariat in providing technical and analytical support, ensuring alignment of NHRI performance with the Paris Principles, and facilitating their integration into the international human rights system.

- The session emphasized the importance of mutual trust among NHRIs, which forms the foundation for peer review—a core element of assessing institutional compliance with the Paris Principles.
- During the discussion, Ms. *Chia* from the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) acknowledged the considerable efforts underway in this domain. She noted that when an NHRI reaches the stage of evaluation, the depth of work undertaken becomes apparent, as the SCA assesses nearly 90 institutions within a three-year period. She pointed out that key assessment criteria include pluralism, effectiveness, and adherence to the General Observations issued by the Sub-Committee.
- Ms. *Cynthia*, also from the SCA, emphasized that the accreditation mechanism is the only internationally recognized process that verifies whether an institution qualifies as a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. She underlined the impartial nature of this mechanism and the Committee’s commitment to applying the standards fairly and equally to all institutions, without exception.
- In this context, the President of the National Human Rights Institution of Panama shared his institution’s experience following a recommendation to downgrade its accreditation status to “B.” He described the institution’s intensive engagement with the OHCHR and Panama’s legislative bodies to revise national laws in line with the Paris Principles. These efforts eventually led to aligning the legal framework with the required standards, in coordination with the Network of National Human Rights Institutions of the Americas.
- He also stressed the importance of conveying the SCA's recommendations directly to the head of state and relevant institutions, organizing training workshops on this topic, and enhancing institutional capacity through collaboration with the Inter-American system.
- The session concluded with an interactive discussion involving multiple NHRIs. Participants shared experiences in strengthening engagement with legislative bodies, fulfilling their institutional mandates, conducting training programs, and implementing other activities that reflect their genuine commitment to the Paris Principles.

- **Regional Network Meetings: Participation of the Council Delegation:**

- **African Network of National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI):**

- The network reviewed its past activities, discussed its 2025 action plan, and adopted the 2023 financial auditor’s report. During this session, Ambassador Dr. Moushira Khattab presented the role of the National Council in chairing the African Working Group on Child Rights, along with the planned activities aligned with the following overarching objectives:
 - Promoting the protection of children's rights in Africa through collaboration among national institutions.

- Supporting the alignment of national legislation with international and regional standards.
- Facilitating the exchange of experiences and best practices in the field of child rights.
- Addressing emerging challenges such as climate change, armed conflicts, and irregular migration.

• **Francophone Network of National Human Rights Institutions:**

- The meeting introduced the network and its role in supporting national human rights institutions. It also reviewed the activities of the network during 2023 and 2024 and highlighted selected ongoing initiatives. The 2024 financial auditor's report was approved, and discussions were held on key challenges facing the network—chief among them the heavy reliance on external funding and low member contributions, which jeopardize its financial independence. The network also faces coordination difficulties due to the wide geographic distribution of its member states.
- To address these challenges, the network plans to increase membership contributions by 15%, establish a digital platform for experience-sharing among national committees, and expand its geographical reach to include countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Albania. Future plans also include organizing an international conference in either Belgium or Senegal to strengthen coordination, and supporting Cameroon in monitoring its presidential elections.
- Despite these efforts, the success of the Francophone network remains contingent upon addressing financial shortfalls, enhancing international partnerships, and encouraging governments to adopt legislation supportive of human rights. This underscores the need for collective action to ensure a sustainable impact across the French-speaking world.

Side Events

Ambassador Dr. Moushira Khattab participated as a main speaker in a workshop organized by the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions, titled: *"The Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Addressing the Threats of Forced Displacement in Palestine."* In her address, Ambassador Khattab highlighted the following points:

- The ongoing war against the Palestinian people constitutes an unprecedented violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including—but not limited to—the Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. Women and children make up 78% of the victims.
- This crisis is a catastrophe for humanity, democracy, and human rights. Civilians are being deliberately targeted and are subjected to systematic forced evictions. The continued escalation is driving civilians deeper into conflict zones. The scale of home demolitions and destruction of public infrastructure is causing profound shock and trauma.
- Innocent civilians are being deliberately deprived of basic humanitarian necessities, including electricity, gas, and medical services—not to mention access to drinking water.

The only desalination plant has been intentionally disabled, and a total blockade prevents the entry of any humanitarian aid.

- The right to communication is a human right, as is the right to education—particularly for children. Yet 85% of schools have been deliberately destroyed, depriving 260,000 children of education. Even virtual education is not an option, as internet access has been intentionally cut. For children, securing water and education has become a daily struggle.
- UNRWA faces numerous challenges and must remain operational. While its position is appreciated, there is a call for the UN Secretary-General to exercise his authority under the UN Charter to address the Security Council's failure—due to vetoes and a lack of consensus among its five permanent members. The suffering of the Palestinian people must end.
- A call was made for the UN Secretary-General to demand the implementation of peace resolutions. Should the Security Council fail to act, the UN General Assembly must assume full responsibility under its legal authority.
- The Security Council must be held accountable, including recognizing the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations. Palestine has demonstrated its eligibility for full membership.
- National human rights institutions must be empowered to work with their member states in implementing international human rights and humanitarian law. As noted by previous speakers, this includes monitoring violations, protecting vulnerable civilians, and facilitating the return of those forcibly displaced to their homes.

Separately, Ambassador Dr. Mahmoud Karem participated in discussions during a side event on *“Human Rights and the Protection of Individuals from the Dangers of Drugs: Prevention and Treatment,”* organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).