

**Thirteenth Meeting of Chairpersons of the
United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies,
Geneva, 19 June 2001**

*Cooperation of Human Rights Treaty Bodies with
United Nations Departments, Specialized Agencies, Funds,
Programmes and Nongovernmental Organizations*



Geneva, 19 June 2000

STATEMENT TO THE TWELFTH MEETING OF CHAIRPERSONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES, GENEVA, 5-8 JUNE 2000

COOPERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES WITH UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENTS, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES, FUNDS, PROGRAMMES AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

HELENA NYGREN-KRUG
HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOCAL POINT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
WHO, GENEVA

WHO is delighted that the theme of this year's discussion of the meeting of the Chairpersons of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies is the question of the national impact of the treaty bodies. As we indicated in our statement, last year, WHO is working towards strengthening human rights in WHO and, in this context, is seeking to identify those areas of activity where there is greatest potential to maximize our impact. WHO explicitly expressed interest in exploring how the treaty bodies and other human rights mechanisms, such as the special rapporteurs/ representatives, working groups and experts of the Commission on Human Rights, connect nationally.

As we also reported last year, the evolving WHO strategy on health and human rights, includes advancing the right to health as a human right and health-related rights on the international human rights agenda. Support to the UN human rights system and the UN human rights treaty bodies, in particular, constitutes a key area of work in this regard.

Currently, WHO is providing input to the CRC through its Department on Child and Adolescent Health, the CEDAW through the Department of GWH, and to both of these treaty bodies, as well as the CESCR, through the Department of RHR. The idea now is to build on this work and the relationships which have been forged by exploring in a more streamlined and systematic way how a mutually beneficial relationship can be developed between the UN human rights treaty bodies more broadly and the WHO, including our regional and country offices.

Child rights capacity building is currently well under way in WHO regions and a number of national training workshops will be conducted later this year. The reporting process of the CRC is an integral component of capacity building and national training will be linked to the reporting process, where possible. An increasing number of WHO Regional Offices are becoming involved in the CRC reporting process, following initial WHO capacity building workshops on child rights, and efforts are being made to strengthen WHO input. Furthermore, discussions are under way with the Committee and its secretariat, as well as with partners, on how to best use the concluding observations and recommendations for improving the health situation of children and adolescents in States Parties. These discussions will hopefully lead to more focused contributions from WHO, better coordination amongst WHO and partners at the country level within the context of the CRC reporting process, and more concrete and action-oriented child and adolescent health recommendations from the Committee.

Earlier this year, the Department of Health and Development, which holds the focal point function for health and human rights in WHO, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Health and Human Rights Programme of the Francois Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard School of Public Health, to formulate a strategy for WHO on how best to support the work of the treaty bodies. Through discussions with WHO staff, members of the UN Secretariat, and the members of the treaty bodies themselves, the idea is to formulate an Organization-wide strategy which maximizes the potential benefits to WHO and our member states, the treaty bodies, and the people we are ultimately trying to serve as beneficiaries or right-holders.

Hopefully, when we meet again next year, we be in the process of testing this out and will be welcoming feedback from you. Between now and then, we would be grateful for your input and ideas on how best to formulate such a strategy. We also want to thank UNDP for hosting a few months base an infomral consultation among UN agnecies to review experences and best practices and welcome more informal diaogues which allow us "to roll up our sleeves" and consider options available.

Needless to say, a pertinent question posed by staff as we try to engage the house in providing support to the UN human rights treaty bodies centers upon the question of impact nationally. And we all know that it is a "chicken-and.-egg" situation as the treaty bodies can only function is supported by the agencies and the agencies can only give adequate support when the value-added of doing so is demonstrated.

WHO welcomes this portunt to hear from other agencies in terms of their experiences in benefitting from the