

Paris Principles and National Human Rights Institutions

National Human Rights Institutions

- State bodies which are mandated to protect and promote human rights
- They are part of the State and are funded by the State
- Take the form of National Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman, Public defenders, or others
- They may have many members
- Their core function is investigation and may also receive individual complaints
- Can make recommendations based on the investigations

What are the Paris Principles

- In 1991, a conference of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) was convened in Paris to define common attributes that all new or existing NHRIs should possess.
- The standards came to be known as “Paris Principles”.
- They are UN guidelines that set out the minimum standards that are required for National Human Rights institutions to operate efficiently and be considered credible.
- They were adopted by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in 1993.

6 criteria to operate efficiently

- A broad mandate based on universal human rights standards including a responsibility to protect and promote human rights and combat all forms of discrimination
- Autonomy from the government
- Independence guaranteed by the constitution or national legislation
- Adequate powers of investigation
- Pluralism through membership or through effective cooperation
- Adequate human and financial resources

Why are the Paris Principles important?

- They are minimum conditions that must be met for all NHRI to be considered independent and effective in promoting and protecting human rights
- They provide benchmarks against which new NHRIs can be accredited by the International Coordinating Committee's of NHRI (ICC)
- Accreditation opens the door to participation in work and discussion of the UN Human Rights Council, ICC and other UN agencies

What NHRIs can do?

- Monitor and Report
- Advise Government and Parliament
- Cooperate on International, Regional and National level
- Educate and Inform
- Handle complaints