

# **Concept Note**

## **"Good Human Rights Stories Initiative"**

***Towards a cross-regional coalition of human rights-minded countries to develop and share a new positive narrative on Human Rights***

**Kick-off event during UNGA Ministerial Week**

**New York, September 2018**

## CONCEPT

In the year celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the initiative ("*Good Human Rights Stories*") aspires to promote a fresh positive narrative on human rights in the world, based on celebrating individual and cross-regional ownership of the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

Its central focus will be on good human rights stories and on aspiring to inspire, among its members and others, the implementation of human rights-based policies and open consultative processes in all fields, by identifying, sharing, showcasing, and promoting positive examples.

The initiative aims to complement the important work being carried out by different human rights bodies (Human Rights Council, UNGA 3C, OHCHR) and other good governance initiatives, including at the national, regional and multilateral fronts.

As an informal initiative, it does not require or envision the creation of any new institutional or other "formal" structures among participating countries.

## INSPIRATION AND MEMBERSHIP UNDERTAKINGS

On the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the 25th Anniversary of the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*, the members of the initiative reassert the indispensability of the human rights framework to tackle all major challenges of the 21st century.

The members assert respect for human rights as a founding value and a central pillar of their internal and external action. They celebrate their individual and collective ownership of human rights and affirm their solid desire to continue improving their own human rights record and supporting through good stories both themselves and others who wish to do the same.

The members commit to strive to promote fundamental government priorities, including sustainable development, security, social justice and resilience, gender equality and inclusiveness, based on the respect for universal human rights and human dignity, good governance, the rule of law, independent democratic institutions and open consultations with civil society, also pursuant to the United Nations *2030 Agenda* and the *Sustainable Development Goals*.

They neither view nor present themselves as "perfect" examples of human rights, but rather as countries who are committed to striving for constant improvement in all fields.

They recognize the importance of UN human rights mechanisms and aspire to work closely with UN Special Procedures. They also acknowledge the positive role of National Human Rights Institutions and other similar national bodies and commit to take necessary actions to guarantee the adequate resourcing and independence in their work.

By taking part in this initiative, members undertake to meet annually/twice a year in Geneva and New York at Ministerial level -- with the participation, as appropriate, of academics, business representatives, civil society, and other experts -- in order to discuss and promote positive human rights practices and experiences on a different topic each time, and to foster partnerships to support the promotion and protection of human rights domestically and globally.

The members of the coalition may also support each other in the organisation of “good stories” bilateral, regional, cross-regional or multilateral meetings and events on human rights topics of their choosing, in triangular cooperation visits and initiatives to share experiences and practices with third countries, etc.

The coalition will be open to new members. Founding members of the coalition will determine future membership criteria.

## **UNGA EVENT**

A launch event of the *Good Human Rights Stories Initiative* is envisaged in New York in September 2018 during the UNGA high-level week. The event will be co-chaired by the founding members of the initiative (around 12) and be open to the UN membership, international and regional organisations and representatives from civil society.

Members of the initiative, represented at the highest possible Ministerial level, will be invited to speak at the event to present one domestic “good story” of their choosing. They will be encouraged to do so in the liveliest way possible – use of live feeds with their countries, arresting audio-visual presentations, participation of others in the presentations themselves as appropriate (including civil societies or other individuals or institutions if they are an integral part of the presented “good story,” etc.).

Other invited speakers may include the UNSG and senior UN officials, influential personalities related to the thematics of the presented good stories, and representatives from civil society.

A contact group comprised of one member from each UN Mission of the participating countries will be established to coordinate the proposed launch event in NYC and with capitals.

A joint short political declaration, along the lines of the inspiration and undertakings outlined above, is envisioned to be signed during the UNGA side event by the members of the initiative, as a concrete outcome of the event.