

UN opens a human rights office for the Pacific

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is in the process of establishing a regional office for the Pacific in Suva, Fiji. OHCHR will also have as of next year a sub-office based in Honiara, the Solomon Islands.

The High Commissioner, Ms. Louise Arbour, is the principal UN official with responsibility for human rights and is accountable to the Secretary-General. The High Commissioner seeks to lead the international human rights movement by acting as a moral authority and voice for victims. At the same time, the High Commissioner and her Office engages in dialogue and builds constructive cooperation with Governments to strengthen national human rights protection. The Office seeks to work with an ever wider range of actors, including National Human Rights Institutions, NGOs, academic institutions and the private sector, to instil commitment to human rights as widely as possible. The High Commissioner has been given the task of integrating human rights thinking and standards throughout the work of the United Nations. OHCHR works with other parts of the UN to achieve this goal and participates fully in each of the UN's programmes - peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation and humanitarian affairs.

OHCHR main objectives in the Pacific are to assist in establishing and reinforcing national human rights protection systems; to support national and regional human rights initiatives, promote the respect and implementation of international human rights norms and standards; to encourage and support treaty ratification and reporting; and to provide training and capacity building for all stakeholders. To achieve these objectives, OHCHR-Pacific will work in close partnerships with Governments of the region, the Judiciary and Legislature. It will also cooperate with National Human Rights Institutions and civil society, including NGOs and academic institutions. Further, the Office will strengthen collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum as well as UN agencies and bodies. In the long term, OHCHR's objective is to assist in developing a culture of human rights in the region

In performing its work, OHCHR bases itself on the principle that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. All rights civil, cultural, economic, political and social - should be given equal emphasis, and promoted and protected without any discrimination. The realization and enjoyment of all rights for women and men must be ensured on a basis of equality.