



## The First Year of the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR)... Consolidation of the Vision and Political Will



The SSCHR started holding its meetings in 2020 to implement its functions as mandated in the decision of the Prime Minister (Decision No. 2396 of 2018 issued on November 14, 2018) and to follow up on the progress made in the work of its Technical Secretariat (TS) which started in beginning of the year 2020. The discussions and results of the meetings confirmed that the establishment of SSCHR is a direct response to the political will of the State at the highest level to uphold all human rights, economic, social, cultural, civil and political, as well as the conviction that human rights are an important component of the "Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030". The ministries and member bodies of SSCHR committed to continue their coordinated and parallel work on all aspects of the human rights file to ensure that the SSCHR represents an important addition to the efforts to strengthen the institutional structure to respect and protect human rights. This recognizes the necessity to build on Egypt's significant achievements over the past years in the field of human rights at the legislative, executive and institutional levels, taking into consideration the opportunities and challenges posed by the national context and in accordance with national determinants and priorities.

To effectively implement its mandate, the year 2020 witnessed extensive work by SSCHR to prepare the first National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS), where the Committee approved the action plan for this purpose. This is in direct response to Committee mandate as stipulated in the decision of the Prime Minister (Article Three states its role to "develop a national strategy for human rights

and action plans for its implementation and follow-up by the concerned authorities"). SSCHR also approved the Government's commentary on the 14th (2018/2019) Annual Report of the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) and established a number of working groups to discuss and study in depth specific human rights files in order to give the necessary impetus to achieve progress. In its first year, the SSCHR TS completed the formation of its institutional structure and specialized work units, recruited the required human resources, and formulated a detailed work plan. The TS studied and categorized the various recommendations received by Egypt in the field of human rights from national, regional and international mechanisms, and prepared a number of legislative proposals in order to achieve more consistency between Egyptian legislation and Egypt's constitutional and international commitments, which will be presented successively to the Supreme Committee for study. The TS prepared responses to a number of correspondences received from international and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as drafts of a number of national reports to be submitted to those mechanisms and issued a number of reports that review national efforts to promote human rights. The necessary technical steps have been taken to establish the SSCHR website on the Internet, in preparation for its launch during 2021 in order to introduce the Committee, its mandate, activities, publications as well as introducing the State's most prominent efforts in the field of promoting human rights. The TS took several concrete steps in preparing the electronic databases for the human rights file in Egypt.

# Efforts to Prepare the First National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS)



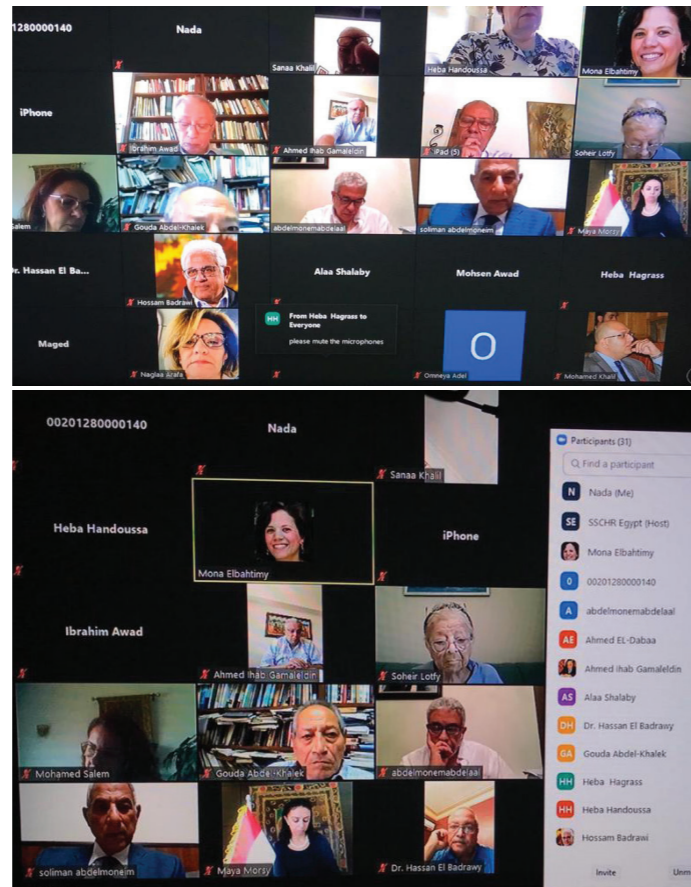
Mr Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of SSCHR met, on December 22, 2020, with members of the TS where he stressed that the establishment of the Supreme Committee reflects the presence of a political will that is committed to improve the human rights situation, emphasizing the importance of the role assigned to the SSCHR Technical Secretariat to implement the tasks entrusted to it in this framework.

In his dialogue with members of the TS, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed that human rights and building human capacities are at the heart of the State's development strategy, noting that the efforts made by the national agencies in this framework reflect a confirmed and well established national conviction, and that the comprehensive development process, led by President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, is progressing steadily based on an integrated vision that takes into account human rights in their broad and comprehensive sense; and prioritizes above all the needs and aspirations of the Egyptian citizen. The Head of the SSCHR Technical Secretariat and the directors of its various units presented the progress achieved in its work during its first year and the work plans for 2021. The Minister of Foreign Affairs commended the achievements of the TS, stressing the importance of continuing close coordination between the various national authorities in this regard, with a view to enhance the efforts made by Egyptian State agencies in the various fields of human rights to primarily result in a positive impact on Egyptian citizens and to respond to their aspirations.

## 1) Completion of the Preparatory Phase

The preparatory phase started with the TS compiling future plans, programs and activities related to human rights in coordination with all ministries and concerned authorities. The TS also studied already approved action plans and national strategies in various areas to achieve integration between these and the NHRS by building on their objectives, programs and activities to ensure complementarity from a comprehensive human rights perspective.

During this phase, the TS studied the national human rights strategies and action plans of a number of countries, with the aim of identifying best practices and relevant experiences. The final recommendations received by Egypt from international and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as the recommendations of the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), and the status of their implementation were also compiled, categorized and studied, in coordination with all ministries and relevant authorities. This preparatory phase of the development of strategy contributed to an extensive assessment of the needs for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.



## 2) Formation of the "Advisory Body"

The Advisory Body was formed comprising 25 public figures and experts specialized in law, economics, public policies and strategic planning, to draw on their diverse expertise in the process of preparing the strategy. The TS held a virtual meeting with the Advisory Body on July 18, 2020 and a second meeting was hosted in the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 17, 2020 to discuss the first draft of the strategy. The meeting was partly attended by Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of SSCHR and delivered a speech where he emphasized that the initiative to prepare the first integrated and long-term national strategy for human rights in Egypt responds to the firm political will of the State to give impetus to the relevant national efforts by adopting a comprehensive and serious approach to promoting fundamental rights and freedoms characterized by a clear vision and strategic planning.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs highlighted that national efforts to advance human rights are based on President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's directives to focus on all human rights as an essential part of the State's comprehensive development plan, based on the recognition of the importance of human rights as an essential component of the modern civil state. Mr Shoukry pointed out that the use of the prestigious national expertise included in the Advisory Body to provide comments and suggestions on the draft strategy reflects the broad participatory and consultative approach adopted by the SSCHR in its preparation process, which shall also include consultation with representatives of civil society..

The Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that this approach is consistent with the participatory planning process pursued

by the State, which shall contribute to the strategy's reflection of the visions, suggestions and aspirations of all Egyptian people. In this regard, Minister Shoukry emphasized that Egypt's efforts do not start from nowhere, rather from a history of solid national institutions, a progressive Constitution and a unique legal heritage. For their part, the members of the Advisory Body praised the initiative of the SSCHR to prepare the strategy through a structured scientific approach that identifies strengths and opportunities related to many human rights issues and highlights their challenges as well as the results intended to be achieved.. The meeting witnessed an in-depth and rich discussion on the content of the draft strategy and members of the Advisory Body appreciated the consultative approach adopted by the SSCHR in the preparation process

## 3) Consultation with the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)

The Technical Secretariat of the SSCHR held a meeting with the National Council for Human Rights on December 24, 2020, at the headquarters of the Council, in the presence of Mr. Mohamed Fayeque, the President of the Council, and a number of its members. The meeting aimed to identify the Council's proposals within the framework of the preparation process for the first national strategy for human rights in Egypt. During the meeting, the steps for preparing the strategy and its main pillars were reviewed.

The President of the National Council welcomed the efforts of the SSCHR to prepare the strategy. Mr Fayeque and members of the Council reviewed and presented a number of issues that represent a priority for the Council in light of the recommendations of its various reports.



## The Minister of Foreign Affairs commends the Progress achieved in the Work of the SSCHR Technical Secretariat in 2020



His Excellency, Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and President of the SSCHR met on December 23rd with the members of the SSCHR TS. Minister Shoukry stressed that the establishment and work of SSCHR comes as a practical translation of the strong political will of the Egyptian State, at its highest level, to protect, promote and respect human rights, highlighting the importance of the role entrusted to the SSCHR TS to carry out the tasks entrusted to it in this regard.

In his dialogue with the members of the TS, the Minister of Foreign Affairs affirmed that human rights and human development are at the heart of the State's development strategy. Mr Shoukry noted that the efforts made by the national agencies in this regard reflect a solid national conviction, and that the comprehensive development process

led by President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi is moving steadily forward based on an integrated vision that takes into account human rights in their broad and comprehensive sense; and addresses the needs and aspirations of the Egyptian citizen above all else.

The Head of the SSCHR TS and the heads of the various units presented progress achieved during its first year as well as workplans for 2021.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs commended the progress achieved in the work of the Technical Secretariat during its first year and emphasized the importance of continuous coordination with the different national bodies with a view to strengthen the efforts of State institutions in the different areas of human rights, to impact positively on the Egyptian citizen and to respond to their aspirations.

## The SSCHR Technical Secretariat meets with Representatives of Ministries and Government Agencies



The SSCHR held an extensive meeting in March 2020 with representatives of 35 ministries and Government agencies, with the aim of introducing the role, tasks and mandates of the Committee, as well as Egypt's obligations arising from international and regional human rights treaties. This meeting came in light of the commitment of the TS keenness to enhance communication with the focal points of the ministries and official bodies on a permanent basis to advance the coordination of efforts.

## Publications issued by the Technical Secretariat in 2020

The SSCHR Technical Secretariat issued a number of reports reviewing national efforts related to the International Days of Human Rights, as follows:

- **A report on Egyptian efforts to uphold the right to water** on the occasion of the celebration of the World Water Day on March 22. It reviews efforts to uphold the right to water and sanitation, national indicators for the enjoyment of drinking water and sanitation services, and new initiatives to provide drinking water.
- **A report on Egyptian efforts to uphold the right to health** on the occasion of the celebration of World Health Day on April 7. It reviews the most important features of the constitutional and legal frameworks that reinforce the right to health, and deals with Egypt's Vision 2030 for this right, State expenditure on health, national indicators for health services, and national initiatives and campaigns to promote the right to health.
- **A report on national efforts to uphold the right to a healthy environment** on the occasion of the celebration of the World Environment Day on June 5. It reviews the most important features of the constitutional and legal frameworks for upholding the right to a healthy environment, and deals with Egypt's Vision 2030 for this right, initiatives and projects for the realization of the right, and national indicators related to upholding the right, and finally reviews the level of State expenditure on environmental protection.
- **A report on national efforts to host refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt** on the occasion of World Refugee Day on June 20. It reviews the national efforts made at the international and regional levels regarding refugees and asylum seekers' issues, the efforts of the Egyptian Government in favor of refugees and asylum seekers, and national efforts to provide the necessary care for refugees and displaced persons in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- **A report on the national efforts to combat drug abuse**, on the occasion of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26. It reviews the security agencies' work against drug abuse, the efforts of the Fund for Combating and Treating Addiction and Drug Abuse, and the efforts

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in strengthening international cooperation to confront the international drug problem.

- **A report on the Egyptian efforts to uphold the right to food** on the occasion of the celebration of World Food Day, October 16. It reviews the national framework to protect this right, in addition to Government's efforts at the level of policies and operational programs to enhance the upholding of this right.
- **A report on national efforts to promote children's rights** on the occasion of World's Children's Day on November 20. It reviews the constitutional and legislative frameworks established for the rights of the Egyptian child, national institutions and policies to promote and protect children's rights pertaining to education and health care, and the protection of children, adolescents and young adults.
- **A report on national efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Egypt** on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3. It reviews the constitutional and legal references for those rights and the various executive policies and programs to promote them.
- **A report on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day** on September 10. It reviews the active role of Egypt within the framework of the international human rights regime, and the most important features of the constitutional framework for the protection of human rights. It also sheds light on the most prominent national efforts to implement human rights in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- **The TS has also prepared two reports on national efforts to uphold human rights in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.**



## Preparation and Approval of the Government Comments on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the National Council for Human Rights for 2018/2019

Following the NCHR issuance in March 2020 of its fourteenth Annual Report covering the period from mid-2018 to mid-2019, SSCHR examined the observations and recommendations of the report, as well as prepared and approved the Government commentary in preparation for holding a joint meeting between the Supreme Committee and the National Council to discuss the content of the report and the Government's comment.

This reflects the serious consideration accorded by SSCHR to the NCHR reports including their observations and recommendations, in light of the important national role the Council plays in promoting human rights. It also reflects the Supreme Committee's conviction that strengthening consultation with the National Council on various human rights issues and files shall positively reflect on the advancement of human rights.

## SSCHR cooperates with the UN to learn of successful country experiences to establish the National Database to follow up on the implementation human rights recommendations

To implement its mandate in regards to the follow up on the implementation of Egypt's regional and international commitments derived from the related treaties and protocols, the Technical Secretariat (TS) communicated with the OHCHR to acquire the National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD). This database is an electronic platform established by OHCHR to support countries in the registration, tracking and preparation of reports for the implementation of human rights recommendations of international and regional organizations and national mechanisms which allows for a systematic approach for the compilation and management of information for the implementation of all recommendations by the different treaty bodies.

The TS held several meetings with the OHCHR team to discuss ways and means to benefit from this system for the preparation of a National Human Rights Strategy and the establishment of an electronic platform to document and follow up on the implementation of recommendations of human rights treaty mechanisms. OHCHR is to prepare a program of Technical Assistance to train members of the TS for the deployment of the NRTD which is expected to facilitate the preparation of periodic national reports to be presented by Egypt to the concerned international and regional treaty bodies and to follow up on the implementation of recommendations issued by these bodies.

In the same vein and to further learn of other countries experiences, and best practices in this respect, the TS organized in coordination with OHCHR meetings with

its counterparts in Mauritius, Mexico and Portugal to discuss their experiences in the implementation of national databases to follow up on implementation of n international recommendations through the different state institutions in a coordinated and integrated manner.



## The Ministry of Education amends the Economics Textbook in Compliance with the Principles of Human Rights in Response to the Observation by SSCHR

The Ministry of Education introduced an amendment to the economics textbook for the general secondary school (high school) for the new academic year (2020/2021), to comply with the standards and principles of human rights and national obligations in this regard. The amendment came in response to an observation made by the SSCHR regarding a statement in the economics book, regarding the categorization of human needs such as clothing, food, housing, health, education and security into primary and secondary, in contrast to the affirmation of international conventions, to which Egypt is a signatory. The conventions state that these needs are human rights that must be treated equally as they are indivisible. The Ministry of Education welcomed the observation, and informed the TS of the SSCHR that it had made an amendment to the content of the types of needs contained in the economics textbook



for the general secondary school in page number "131" in the academic year 2020/2021's edition; confirming the equality of all human rights, in compliance with Article Five of "The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action", adopted by the heads of States and Governments of the world at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

## Egypt celebrates the International Human Rights Day by lighting up the Pyramids and the buildings of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice



Egypt participated in the celebration of International Human Rights Day on December 10, by lighting the Giza pyramids, the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Heliopolis Courts Complex and the Abdeen Court, affirming Egypt's pride of this occasion and its historical role in supporting the march of the global human rights movement and strengthening the international regime that protects it. The lighting of the pyramids of Giza, which represents a symbol of the Egyptian civilization striking in the depths of history, is an indication of Egypt's continuous providence in various fields, including the early establishment of a culture of human rights and the upholding of the values of stability, solidarity and pride of the national identity. The lighting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters in the Nile Corniche in Cairo came as an affirmation to Egypt's role in supporting and strengthening the global human rights regime and its permanent commitment to its international obligations in this field; while the lighting of the New Heliopolis Court Complex embodied Egypt's adherence to the values of justice, equality and the rule of law, as solid foundations to ensure and protect Human rights.

