This edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter continues to highlight activities of ICSW-affiliated regional organizations. This time we present some materials from the regional conference on the theme *"Promoting the dignity and worth of people"* organized by the Middle East and North Africa member of the ICSW, in cooperation with the Friedrich–Ebert Foundation in Rabat, Morocco. The conference was part of the preceding preparations for the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development on the same topic convened in Seoul in June 2016. The articles selected for this edition cover some salient features of the dignity discourse and policy options in the context of the region. Reflecting upon recent political development, the authors also touch upon the role of youth in the region, stressing the need for more inclusive development and addressing concerns of young people.

The Editor

The human dignity and value of every human being: what does it mean for Morocco today?

By Driss GUERRAOUI

The theme of dignity seems abstract on the surface but in fact it is at the heart of what should be the central concern of public policy not only in our country, Morocco, by also playing a decisive role on the agenda of all regional and international organizations concerned with human condition. It has direct relevance for the world development in the XXI century.

It is also of the utmost importance to try to see the interaction of these two fundamental concepts: the dignity and value of the human being.

Indeed, dignity is a value and a legal principle, it plays a key role in equality law. The quest for dignity is universally accepted, but interpretation what constitutes a life with dignity differs in national contexts. Dignity is upheld when people have guaranteed access to basic human rights in the context of equal opportunities without discriminatory treatment based on sex, age, social status, place of residence and physical conditions of individual (whether they are healthy or are burdened with mental or physical disabilities). Dignity is also upheld when in society there is effective access to education, training, access to knowledge and technology, including information technology, where the right to health care and at least basic medical coverage is protected. We could also list a minimum subsistence income and food security, access to decent work, housing, culture, recreation, the opportunity to live in a healthy environment, with support for families and old age, support to people with disabilities, guarantees of a fair trial, freedom of expression, freedom of worship,

Driss Guerraoui
Professor at the Mohammed V University in Rabat, Secretary-General of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Morocco, Distinguished Fellow of ICSW

freedom of movement, participation in the life of the community, guaranteed security, plus rights to basic social services, be it drinking water, electricity or transport.

In other words human dignity will be definitely strengthened in the future with the completion of the post-2015 agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Human dignity is the basis for human rights, and various important international documents, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and such landmarks as the Millennium Development Goals, numerous statements in connection with human rights, and initiatives such as the Universal Social Protection Floor and the Sustainable Development Agenda represent a movement in the right direction.

As for the value of the human being in society, it necessarily involves three concurrent actions: the recognition,

consideration and involvement of all citizens in decision-making and participation in community affairs. Along with the above we could mention democratic governance, competence, responsibility, fairness, justice, equality and social inclusion, socio-cultural and socio-professional characteristics that constitute the fundamental criteria.

In this context the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) of Morocco has developed a social framework where dignity and human value are given special attention; this approach is shared today by members of many economic and social councils and similar institutions around the world.

Indeed, immediately after the establishment of the CESE by His Majesty the King Mohammed VI on 21 February 2011, the Council launched various activities to develop a new Social Charter. This work was accomplished, bringing on board many stakeholders from around the country and also encouraging internal debates among the Council members. Thus nearly 70 actors representing all segments of society (government, trade unions, associations and professional organizations, civil society and national advisory bodies) were heard by the Council. The outcome of this participatory approach was a joint report prepared through collaborative effort. This report was adopted at the General Meeting of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) at the 9th session on 29 November 2011. The report represents a repository of enforceable fundamental rights as enshrined in the new Moroccan Constitution and the international treaties, charters, covenants and conventions to which Morocco subscribed.

The Charter combines three integrated parts; it includes economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects, where basic human rights are on top. The rights are guaranteed so as to ensure human dignity, maintain cohesion of society and promote coherent, comprehensive and harmonious human

development on a sustainable basis. Part two of the document reviews the procedural goals that embody the principles and rights, while the third part specifies the necessary indicators for monitoring the achievement of these objectives.

This body of reference contains 39 fundamental principles and guaranteed rights. Divided into 92 operational objectives with 250 indicators for monitoring progress, the Social Charter is divided into six integrated components: 1 / access to essential services and social welfare; 2 / education, training and cultural development; 3 / inclusion and solidarity; 4 / social dialogue, civil dialogue and innovative partnerships; 5 / environmental protection; 6/ governmental accountability and the promotion of economic and social rights and democracy.

Embracing the presentation of the individual and collective freedoms, the first five sections cover the indispensable foundation for achieving social cohesion as well as social progress in Morocco. The sixth section reviews the implementation process and covers its basic pre-conditions.

The parties to the contract, who are stakeholders, are responsible for translating the agreements into practice and achieving the objectives of this framework; it is understood that any goal or a stipulated right may be subject to one or more contracts. In this sense the Charter -- a major social contract -- represents a genuine cement for social cohesion and sustainable human development and the most appropriate institutional framework for strengthening the national foundation for universal social protection -- the essential guarantor of the dignity and value of human beings in Morocco in the 21 century.

Dignity through Social Protection in the MENA Region

By Bachir TAMER

Bachir Tamer
Professor, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco, President of Middle East and North Africa region, ICSW; member of the Supervisory and Advisory Board of ICSW

Introduction

The social and political upheavals that shook the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in recent years revealed the need for a new systematic analysis of the repercussions of political and socio-economic shifts that these countries are experiencing. Focusing new approaches at the appropriate mechanisms to protect the well-being and dignity of people could engender more effective social protection policies in the region.

The concept of human dignity occupied a central place in the slogans of the Arab revolutions in 2011. Philosophical dictionaries are of limited use in this context. As was stressed by Immanuel Kant many years ago, dignity or "the intrinsic worth" of a human being is found in practice rather than in theory. People intuitively cherish dignity and are longing for respect and for acknowledgement of their inherent rights. Approaching dignity as a concept reveals that it is far from simple and has a multi-faceted nature in which political, cultural, philosophical, religious and legal aspects are all present. There are numerous references to this concept in human rights law. All international conventions in this area, beginning with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, focus on the guarantee and respect for human dignity. The Declaration states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" .

It is obvious that the quest for dignity has always been an indispensable element in the human struggle to promote democratic development and socio-economic progress. The countries of the North African region have been a part of this struggle. Respect for human dignity in this light provides an underpinning for efforts to improve outcomes of economic and social development. This requires, first of all, the implementation of the existing legislative commitments or sometimes the revision of constitutions. And second, it requires programs that respect human dignity and set it as a crucial policy objective.

The purpose of this article is to provide a succinct overview of existing social protection programs and schemes-- important tools in the quest for dignity.

Focusing on the existing social protection systems in the North African region we try to cover not only social insurance and social assistance programs, but also to discuss the situation of some social groups, including youth. This analysis cannot but be limited by the availability of recent data. We will use the information contained in the documents

provided by the Economic Commission for Africa of the United Nations (1).

Social protection is defined differently by various scholars and international organizations; it is also defined differently by governments, and much depends here on the national context. In general terms by social protection we understand a system of rules, institutions and programs for the provision of basic social services, namely the services listed in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2). Therefore, social protection could be seen as an integral part of the fight against poverty and inequality.

But social protection goes beyond this level. The International Labour Organization (ILO) underscores that social protection not only contributes to the protection of vulnerable groups in society but is also instrumental in promoting reforms aimed at social justice and wealth redistribution. The Social Protection Floor initiative is particularly promising as a universal rights-based scheme that is affordable for most countries. (3).

In Europe, the social protection systems became prevalent with the advent of the welfare state after the Second World War. Being part of the colonial periphery, North African countries started to implement some elements of similar systems, then concentrated their efforts on nationally appropriate designs after gaining independence in the second half of the twentieth century.

Facing dire socio-economic consequences of "unrestrained" globalization based on the neoliberal order, with particularly negative repercussions for fragile economies in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, many countries had to come up with social protection schemes to respond to poverty and marginalization. They also requested the UN, including the ILO, to help them with

updating their social protection programs, so as to make them effective and affordable.

Social Protection Systems and Programs in the North African Countries

Social protection systems in the North African region have substantial similarities, despite being inherited from different colonial regimes (French for the Maghreb, and English for Egypt and the Sudan; Libya was an exception in adopting a comprehensive social protection system of its own design.) Social protection systems are seen in these countries as the axis for policies that reduce poverty and marginalization and generate employment opportunities, in addition to being a tool for creating solidarity between generations and social groups.

Examples of these are the development strategies and social protection programs in Tunisia and Algeria, the National Initiative for Human Development in Morocco, and similar program in Egypt, the basic social services in Mauritania or the social protection program in Sudan.

The countries of North Africa have adopted different models of development under the different economic conditions for each country, which implies a difference of policy responses. The turmoil of recent years during the Arab Spring has revealed inequalities within countries and has drawn attention to striking differences in terms of the financial, human and technical capacities among Arab countries. But there are similarities in the difficulties they are facing. For example, illiteracy rates of between 30% and 40% for those 10 years, and overall unemployment, between 10% and 14%, which are still very high. The unemployment rate in MENA region is one of the highest in the world, especially among young people (nearly 25% against 14% as a world average). The unemployment rates vary by country, ranging from 18 to 43%, with relatively

higher levels for young graduates and women. Paradoxically in some cases the unemployment rate increases with education level (e.g. in Algeria and Morocco).

1. The Social Insurance Systems

The countries of the North African region have similarities in the organization of their social insurance systems, and many face similar predicaments; for example, the coverage ratios remain low because of the spread of the informal economy. The social insurance rubric embraces such aspects as health insurance, disability, maternity leave and insurance against accidents and compensation in the event of death. Retirement income is also provided for those who are eligible — those who paid their contributions or worked in the public sector. Social insurance programs are divided among different funds to support each aspect mentioned.

Comparing existing situations in these countries, we see that such countries as the Sudan or Mauritania do not have sufficient funds or the institutional structures necessary to provide this kind of insurance.

A number of countries try to address the existing gaps by systematic application of protection-related policies based on principles of Islamic solidarity. For example, in Mauritania, the State Administration for the Management of *Zakat*, or the Solidarity Fund, is state-run, and is based on the contributions of those employed, redistributing them to those who are not in the labour force.

The state in those countries remains the main guarantor of social insurance systems, and the private sector contribution is still very limited. The workers themselves are often unable to pay for their insurance because of low average incomes. It should be noted that some groups remain deprived of such

insurance completely, i.e. workers in rural areas, domestic workers and students.

Also, these countries are passing through a demographic transition, which has resulted in a change in structure among population groups, with older segments growing. Because of the population's ageing and the narrow financial base, these systems are facing a growing inability to secure sound financing. The longer-run financial sustainability of those systems is problematic. In the face of multiple needs and the lack of funds, the national social protection systems have been obliged to introduce frequent periodic changes to their systems (as in Algeria and Tunisia, for example) or to reform the pension system (Morocco).

2. Programs against Poverty and Marginalization

These programs could be roughly divided into two groups: the first type is designed to help the vulnerable groups and the poor, as well as those in disadvantaged regions. The purpose is to build capacity to cope with deprivations. It covers the poor, women, children and people with special needs. This type of program also targets youth because of the central role that this group plays in the future of societies. However, these programs are largely *ad hoc* and do not have a regular or continuous nature. Sometimes they do not cover all regions of the country. For example, Mauritania, a country most often facing food insecurity, has always had a policy of state support -- in cases of urgent need.

Other countries in the region, such as Egypt and Morocco, also use similar programs that offer state subsidies for alleviating the plight of the poor, doing that by reducing the burden of the high prices of essential goods. Apart from that, the Ministries of Welfare and Social Insurance, in both Tunisia and Algeria,

provide micro-credit to people who want to start a simple business project. Taken together, however, these types of programs nevertheless represent a heavy financial burden on the national budget.

Regarding the poorest and marginalized groups, many North African countries have recently passed legislation under which such groups benefit directly, as well as envisioning the establishment of reception centers for administrating public assistance. The recently adopted Egyptian Constitution (2014) also mandates the provision of public social protection programs for the above population groups.

It should be noted that civil society organizations also play a crucial role in helping the disadvantaged groups through a variety of projects, including capacity development aimed at income generation. The programs of those organizations provide training to enhance the skills and capabilities of such groups and increase their options.

Regarding persons with special needs, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have enacted special legislation to provide basic services for people with disabilities and have granted compensation. Legislation in Egypt also aims at allocating a certain percentage of jobs (between 1% and 7%)   to people with disabilities.

3. The Situation of Youth: formidable new challenges

The population group that includes those under 25 years of age accounts for over half of the population of North African countries. (According to demographic projections that share will show some decline over the next decade, with the exception of in Mauritania). Given the present demographic picture, the region is facing strong challenges in the areas of education, professional training and employment

opportunities.
 On average, the countries in the North African region are spending between 20 to 30% of their state budgets on education. Despite such substantial efforts aimed at achieving universality in education coverage (between 85 to 95 % of children are enrolled), the education systems generally continue to suffer from inequality, imposed indignities and a high attrition rate, with detrimental consequences to overall performance.

Millions of young people in the region suffer from illiteracy; and the rates among young rural women are particularly high, while the policies of non-formal education in this field are quite low in scope and efficiency.

At a time when the number of graduates of colleges and universities is increasing, youth unemployment rates continue to grow. More than one in five economically active young people are unemployed in the region. That is due to the inadequate adaptation of the system to the labour market's needs and the inability of the economy to create enough jobs. Youth unemployment particularly affects women and recent university graduates. The solutions aimed at overcoming the youth unemployment crisis are not yet adequate to the scale of the challenge. The placement services and institutional support should be substantially improved so as to provide effective solutions to this scourge.

Youth unemployment and underemployment are real challenges for the dignity of young people, and long-term unemployment is particularly detrimental. It is also a problem for society at large. Instead of benefiting from the work and skills of these young people, societies are wasting them. Young people cannot achieve self-realization, spending a disproportionate amount of time watching TV and sporting events such as football matches, or concentrating on social

networking. Overall, many of them are unable to spend time for productive ends owing to existing structural constraints. As a result, behaviour patterns related to the new youth culture increase the gap with older generations and adults fail to understand the emerging values and preoccupations of the younger generation. The despair and lack of opportunities has been a factor for some young people, prompting drug use, stimulating their desire to emigrate or, in some extreme cases, even to commit suicide. Many young people are underemployed to such an extent that in fact they should be considered unemployed, even if they formally have (a low-paying) job. They swell the ranks of the participants of the informal sector of the economy.

Recent studies of youth relating to their participation in the social protest movements in the region have shown that many young people reject politics in its traditional form. They are also reluctant to participate in elections, preferring new forms of protest, with active use of social networks as a way of mobilizing. In some cases peaceful demonstrations are not the only used tools and are accompanied by extremism, sometimes violent.

The recent experiences stemming from youth movements in the region have made governments fully aware of the perils to the stability of societies, both real and potential, when social inclusion is lacking. So the proposed solutions initiated in the region have resulted in several types of projects aimed specifically at youth, with the overall objective of developing an integrated youth policy and providing the human and financial resources necessary for its implementation: These projects and programs include the following elements:

- Promote better participation of young people and their involvement in decision-making;

 - Promote access to sexual health and mental health services;
- Improve youth access to recreational activities so as to develop the creativity of various sporting and cultural activities;
- Reduce the negative impact of certain social norms and traditional cultural attitudes incompatible with the spirit of their age. (4)

Social protection programs in North African societies are different in content and scope. They have emerged in response to the existing needs and reflect the existing social values and norms. While the existing picture is rather complex, and in many cases complicated, there is a sense of optimism as well. Many communities in the MENA countries are future-oriented and demonstrate dynamism and hope.   The latest events and protest movements, such as the Arab Spring, provide a powerful argument for a more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth as well as for the promotion of comprehensive social protection systems aimed at society as whole. Employment and decent work are crucial drivers of poverty reduction.

References

1. United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, **Journal of African transformation:** *Reflections on Policy and Practice*, Volume 1, number 2, 2016

2. "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection."

3. www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.do;jsessionid=TtZLXDvJlLrLV73ThvF35Lr54g3Qnxjlxv9JL4Gr74HG61PCb2Ly!-319743954?tid=1321&lang=EN

4. United Nations. Economic Commission for Africa (2013) Being young in the Maghreb.

The Road to Dignity

By Bruno POUEZAT

In June 2015 (the time of the conference) - Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Morocco. We publish here an abridged version of Bruno Pouezat's statement.

The transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a historic opportunity to refocus on the sustainable development of the entire planet and to make adjustments, if necessary, adapting our approaches in the light of lessons learned with the MDGs. The challenge is still significant, because the development problems to be addressed by the international community at the dawn of the post-2015 agenda are quite different from those that arose in 2000, with the adoption of the Millennium Declaration.

First observation, while the United Nations is proud to bring people together, it is nonetheless based on the conditions defined by national borders, even if today's threats do not respect borders. All boundaries (such as national territory, but also social class, individual capacities, age, gender, geography, ethnicity or religion,) that humans have created have now become obsolete. The interdependence of relationships is now irreversible, and as a consequence, the problems of a few become, insidiously and sometimes abruptly, the problems of all.

Globalization and the increasing interdependence of countries have created not only unprecedented development opportunities, but also new requirements and, unfortunately, new injustices to the extent that many population groups have not yet been able to benefit from globalization,

nor they are aware of how to benefit from it. During the past decade, the food crisis, as well as the energy, financial, health and environmental crises, affected several countries, sometimes exacerbated by globalization and economic, banking, logistics, political, ethnic, and religious interdependence.

While an open international high-level Working Group has concentrated on the identification and definition of SDGs – taking into consideration such cross-cutting themes as gender, environment, migration and human rights - it is becoming increasingly clear that human dignity is the common denominator. The Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, has reflected this awareness by describing the global commitments for the post-2015 period as a "road to dignity." His December report to the General Assembly of the United Nations, entitled "Dignity for All by 2030: eradicating poverty, transforming our lives and protecting the planet," represents a fundamental thread providing clear directions and goals for dialogues and discussion regarding the "post-2015" period.

The findings are harsh. On a global scale, while some people live in opulence, billions of people face endemic poverty, gross inequalities, unemployment, disease and destitution. The elimination of poverty by 2030 is the main objective of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. We live in a world of plenty that has generated enormous scientific promise. Yet, for hundreds and hundreds of millions of people around the world, it is also an era of cruel deprivations. The major challenge of our time is to bridge this gap. There will be no dignity without a major reduction in inequalities.

The challenge of inequality is not new, but it is pernicious, undermining from the inside the internal stability and prosperity of our societies. It is also not easy to solve. How,

could we in our societies provide a voice – a vote, a recognition – to women, youth, minorities, migrants and refugees, indigenous peoples and the elderly? And how could we empower the poor and disabled even more? All have the same right to human dignity. To create clearly inclusive and less unequal societies, we must commit ourselves to taking into consideration their perspectives, listening to their voices, considering their priorities as much as we listen to a much more distinct voices of governments and big businesses.

Drawing on the Millennium Development Goals, which have not all been achieved, the Sustainable Development Goals are sensitive to those new challenges, aiming to promote greater dignity and better living conditions for the peoples of the world. More explicit in this sense than the MDGs, the SDGs will open critical new areas of work, such as the fight against inequality, support for sustainable and inclusive economic growth, the promotion of decent work and social protection, but also the provision by governments of social services that are accessible to all, transparent and accountable.

Let me conclude on employment and social protection. In the draft submitted for debate by the report of the Secretary-General, proposed Sustainable Development Goal 8 seeks "to promote sustained economic growth, shared and sustainable, full and productive employment and decent work for all". This proposal raises three points. First, it illustrates the global awareness that, if economic growth is to become a real engine of human development, it must necessarily be accompanied by a decrease in the unemployment rate and a decent quality of the available jobs.

But SDG-8 drives our ambitions further. While 70% of the world population still lacks access to social protection, SDG-8 commits

us to "achieve substantial coverage of poor and vulnerable populations by 2030". Let's ignore for a moment a legitimate question that some might raise in this context, namely, what is the numerical value of the word "substantial". Although the goal raises a question, and it is not only a rhetorical one, because in this area, who are the experts, if not you, why spend so much effort to achieve such an ambitious target?

I'm sure others at this meeting will be able to provide empirical evidence that social protection has a considerable impact on the various dimensions of sustainable development, such as the reduction of inequality and hunger, increasing productivity and building political stability. I would like to encourage you in this way, because the battle is not won yet.

Thus, on the occasion of a recent high-level conference on the challenges of social protection in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark emphasized that social protection should be seen as "the basis of the development process" and not as a parallel goal or even less, a later one. She summarized her position by concluding: "Without social protection, development can not be guaranteed."

The world in 2015 does not yet meet, and by far, all of the expectations expressed in the summer of 1945 by the United Nations Charter. But this 70th anniversary of the Organization is full of the belief that the ideals that gave us life are still relevant, shared and are still a priority, if we wish to address the global challenges our planet faces. With so many prominent events on our calendar and so many new elements to be integrated into national policies as well as in our programs from 1 January 2016 forward, this conference comes at a propitious time. Morocco - whose innovation and development experience attract interest even beyond the

MENA region - could be a close ally to promote "the dignity and worth of persons" as a link between the global political agenda and the most urgent local development challenges.

Main sources:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/700&referer=/english/&Lang=E

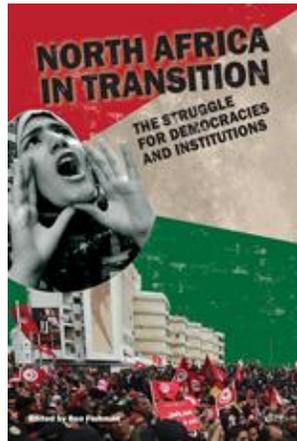http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/117/37/PDF/N1511737.pdf?OpenElement

The opinions expressed in the preceding articles are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect the position of the ICSW Management Committee.

The useful resources and links – the find of the month

North Africa in Transition. *The Struggle for Democracies and Institutions*

Edited by Ben Fishman.
Routledge, London, 2016

North Africa in Transition examines how the people and governments of North Africa have responded to the Arab uprisings that shook the region's politics in 2011. With individual chapters detailing key developments in Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, the authors bring together a wide range of expertise, exploring various reforms and policy options required to ensure progress and stability. The book argues that without the persistent and comprehensive development of key government institutions focused on creating jobs and providing security, the region risks future protests, terrorism or even revolution.
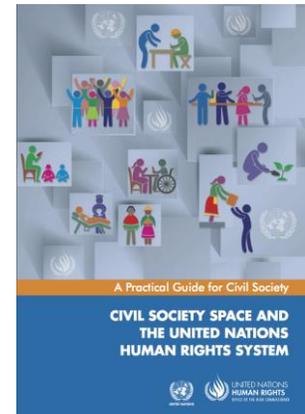
For additional details:

http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/adelphi/by%20year/2015-9b13/north-africa-in-transition-2588

Civil Society Space and the United Nations Human Rights System. A practical guide for civil society,

OHCHR, Geneva, 2014

This guide prepared by OHCHR highlights issues related to the work of civil society actors (CSAs). It begins with a working definition of the terms 'civil society' and 'civil society space'. It then provides an overview of the conditions and environment needed for a free and independent civil society, including relevant international human rights standards for freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and the right to participate in public affairs. The guide includes some examples of how governments and CSAs have worked together to develop space for civil society to carry out its work to advance enjoyment of all human rights.

For more details:

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/CivilSociety/CS_space_UNHRSystem_Guide.pdf