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REFERENCE: UPR/CM/AN

13 October 2010

Dear Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmad and UNCT members,

We would like to take this opportunity to update you on an important development concerning UN reform and human rights that is relevant to your work at country level. In 2006 the General Assembly established the Human Rights Council. A new mandate of the Human Rights Council is to review all Member States' obligations and commitments to human rights in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment of all States. This process, called the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), covers 48 States each year. 128 countries have been reviewed since 2007. By the end of 2011, the Council will have reviewed all 192 Member States. To date, Governments have attached great importance to this process, and it is incumbent upon the United Nations system as a whole to help make this mechanism work effectively.

**Syrian Arab Republic is scheduled for UPR review on 7 October 2011** at the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the UPR Working Group in Geneva. While recognizing that not all UN entities engage in a similar manner in human rights work, there are many ways the Resident Coordinator and UN Country Team may be involved and/or follow the different phases of the UPR process. Annex I *OHCHR Information Note for UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and other UN entities regarding the UPR mechanism* provides further information and ideas.

Firstly, UN funds, agencies and programmes might be contacted by relevant national authorities and stakeholders to seek information on the UPR. One role that the UNCT might be asked to play is to facilitate information on the UPR process, including on the process for the preparation of the national report. To promote consultative processes for the elaboration of the national report, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organisations could be encouraged to contribute to the process.

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Secondly, UN entities are invited by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to consider sharing official UN documentation as inputs to the process. **In this regard, we invite the Resident Coordinator and the UNCT to identify public documents and/or provide specific country submissions with information relevant to the review to OHCHR by 14 March 2011.** A sample submission and more guidance are included in the above-mentioned Information Note. Contributions from UN entities for the reviews of other countries are also available on the OHCHR website ([www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR)).

Thirdly, during the review phase, despite the formal nature of the interaction between the states under review and other UN Member States, there are various ways and means to facilitate interaction with and between relevant actors. The Resident Coordinator and UNCT may be approached to support the attendance/contribution of relevant actors, i.e. national authorities and stakeholders, and/or provide information in this regard. Information on the Voluntary Trust Fund for Participation of national authorities in the UPR is attached as Annex II. Local access for stakeholders could also be facilitated by the UN, for example the UN Information Centres, by convening targeted or public screenings of the webcasts of review meetings.

Fourthly, UNCTs might also be approached by national authorities and/or stakeholders to assist in the follow-up to the UPR. Many of the programmes and activities of UNCTs make valuable contributions to the strengthening of capacities of States and other stakeholders. While the outcome of the UPR should be implemented primarily by the State concerned and, as appropriate, by other relevant stakeholders, the international community may assist in implementing the recommendations and conclusions regarding capacity-building and technical assistance. As a first step, we encourage the broad dissemination of UPR documentation which can make a useful contribution to the human rights debate at the national level. Outcomes from the review include recommendations which may be useful to consider along with other recommendations such as those from the UN human rights treaty bodies and special procedures, when preparing UN planning and programming instruments, including CCA/UNDAFs. We believe that the UPR process could open new opportunities at the country level to further strengthen UN coherence with human rights as one of the key programming principles and thematic issues.

We would be happy to provide the UN Country Team with any further information you may request. The Email address for this purpose is [uprunentities@ohchr.org](mailto:uprunentities@ohchr.org). We would be grateful to receive the name of a contact person(s) for liaison and collaboration on the UPR process, at the same email address.

As you know, Member States, the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights have given high importance to the UPR mechanism which aims at improving the human rights situation on the ground. We look forward to working closely with the UNCT towards this end throughout the different UPR phases.

Yours sincerely,



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Director

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*Encl.:*

- Annex I – OHCHR Information Note to RCs, UNCTs and other UN entities on the UPR
- Annex II – Note Verbal on the Voluntary Trust Fund for Participation in the UPR
- Annex III – General Guidelines for the Preparation of Information under the UPR
- Annex IV – Information Note for National Human Rights Institutions on the UPR
- Annex V – Information Note for relevant stakeholders on the UPR
- Annex VI – Factsheet Human Rights Council