
NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT

2019- 2020

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Authored by: Secretariat of the Committee

REMARKS BY CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE



The advent of Covid-19 has heightened awareness and debate regarding human rights globally. Discussions on the right to food, health, social, economic, civil and political rights have been at the centre of this debate. I am of the firm belief that States should welcome these discussions and aim to be leaders on human rights matters nationally and beyond. Covid-19's magnification of societal inequities, should serve as an opportunity for States to refocus their efforts on developing more robust mechanisms and frameworks to address these very inequities.

The establishment of the National Coordinating Committee for Human Rights in 2019 displays the Government of Saint Lucia's willingness to place the issue of human rights on its national agenda. Furthermore, the existence of such a Committee demonstrates that the advancement of human rights takes a collaborative effort and should encourage dialogue with civil society and the general public. The Committee's composition is an active demonstration of this effort as civil society organisations are well represented.

Since the Committee's establishment, the Secretariat has worked assiduously throughout its year in existence to develop national capacity in human rights, in addition to ensuring that the necessary mechanisms are in place to strengthen the national human rights framework. While proud of the successes achieved thus far, I recognise that there still remains a lot of work ahead. As Chair of the Committee, I remain committed to supporting the Committee in fully realising its mandate, by enhancing its strengths and successes, mitigating its weaknesses and threats and maximizing its opportunities. I am fully aware that the Committee will not achieve all that it intends to accomplish overnight, as the attainment of human rights is not a destination but rather an iterative process, and with commitment and dedication, I believe it can all be achieved.

Adria Rose Sonson
Permanent Secretary
Department of External Affairs

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ABBREVIATIONS

Government of Saint Lucia	GOSL
United Nations	UN
Organization of American States	OAS
National Coordinating Committee for Human Rights	NCCHR
Non-governmental Organisations	NGOs
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	CEDAW
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	CERD
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	CRPD
Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC
International Labour Organization	ILO
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	OHCHR
Inter American Human Rights System	IAHRS
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	IACHR

I. ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

Background

As part of the Government of Saint Lucia (GOSL)'s membership in and interaction with organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization of American States (OAS) and other organisations dealing with pertinent international thematic issues, it has become signatory to a number of human rights instruments. As a consequence, the GOSL is subject to a number of human rights obligations where it must demonstrate national advancement in human rights and must periodically report to these organisations who monitor Saint Lucia's compliance with these obligations.

Nationally, the topics of human rights had not been discussed and addressed from a holistic and coordinated manner, but rather through specialised agencies each performing their human rights obligations within their respective agencies, giving rise to the silo effect. The National Coordinating Committee for Human Rights (NCCHR) was established via Cabinet Conclusion No. 120 of 04/02/2019¹ to foster dialogue among national stakeholders on human rights matters.

The Committee is guided by the principles contained in the following documents:

i. Charter of the United Nations, 1945

The preamble to the Charter of the United Nations states that "we the peoples of the United Nations" are determined (...):

- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

¹ The Committee is the national coordinating mechanism for reporting and monitoring, in addition to developing national awareness and capacity in human rights.

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- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained

ii. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

iii. The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, 1948

The preamble of the Declaration states that:

"All men are born free and equal, in dignity and in rights, and, being endowed by nature with reason and conscience, they should conduct themselves as brothers one to another.

The fulfillment of duty by each individual is a prerequisite to the rights of all. Rights and duties are interrelated in every social and political activity of man. While rights exalt individual liberty, duties express the dignity of that liberty."

iv. The Constitution of Saint Lucia, 1979 Cap1.01, Revised Edition 2001 Chapter 1: Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

v. Cabinet Conclusion No. 120 of 04/02/2019

Functions of the Committee

The NCCHR was therefore established with the aim to develop a more coordinated approach in addressing the national human rights situation. According to the Terms of Reference of the Committee, the Committee shall perform the following functions:

- i. interact with international, regional and local organisations in respect to human rights;
- ii. provide updates on the local human rights situation focusing on the recommendations from the various human rights bodies;
- iii. monitor the implementation of human rights recommendations and serve as a forum for follow-up on the recommendations issued;

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- iv. develop an Action Plan, including proposed strategies and timelines, to advance the implementation of recommendations made by treaty bodies, and under the UPR process
 - v. develop a National Human Rights Strategy/Policy which will serve to improve the promotion and protection of human rights;
 - vi. oversee the preparation of national human rights reports;
 - vii. submits annual reports to the Government of Saint Lucia(Cabinet and Parliament) responding where necessary to specific issues on the human rights agenda and any other reports as requested;
 - viii. semi-annually update the respective ministries/departments/agencies and organisations represented in the Committee of the work of the Committee in an effort to foster knowledge and build capacity ;
 - ix. act in an advisory role to the Government of Saint Lucia (Cabinet and Parliament) on matters related to human rights;
 - xi. perform any other tasks as may be instructed or approved by Cabinet with respect to human rights;
 - xii. enhance public awareness of human rights through education, research and dissemination of information;
 - xiii. promote capacity building for the effective implementation of international human rights treaty obligations undertaken by Saint Lucia;
 - xiv. The Committee shall be empowered to co-opt other members or create subcommittees to oversee the preparation of specific/thematic reports;
 - x. In furthering interaction and ensuring that the input of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is taken into account, the committee shall meet regularly with NGO membership;
 - xi. The work of the Committee may evolve depending on national and international human rights situation and requirements

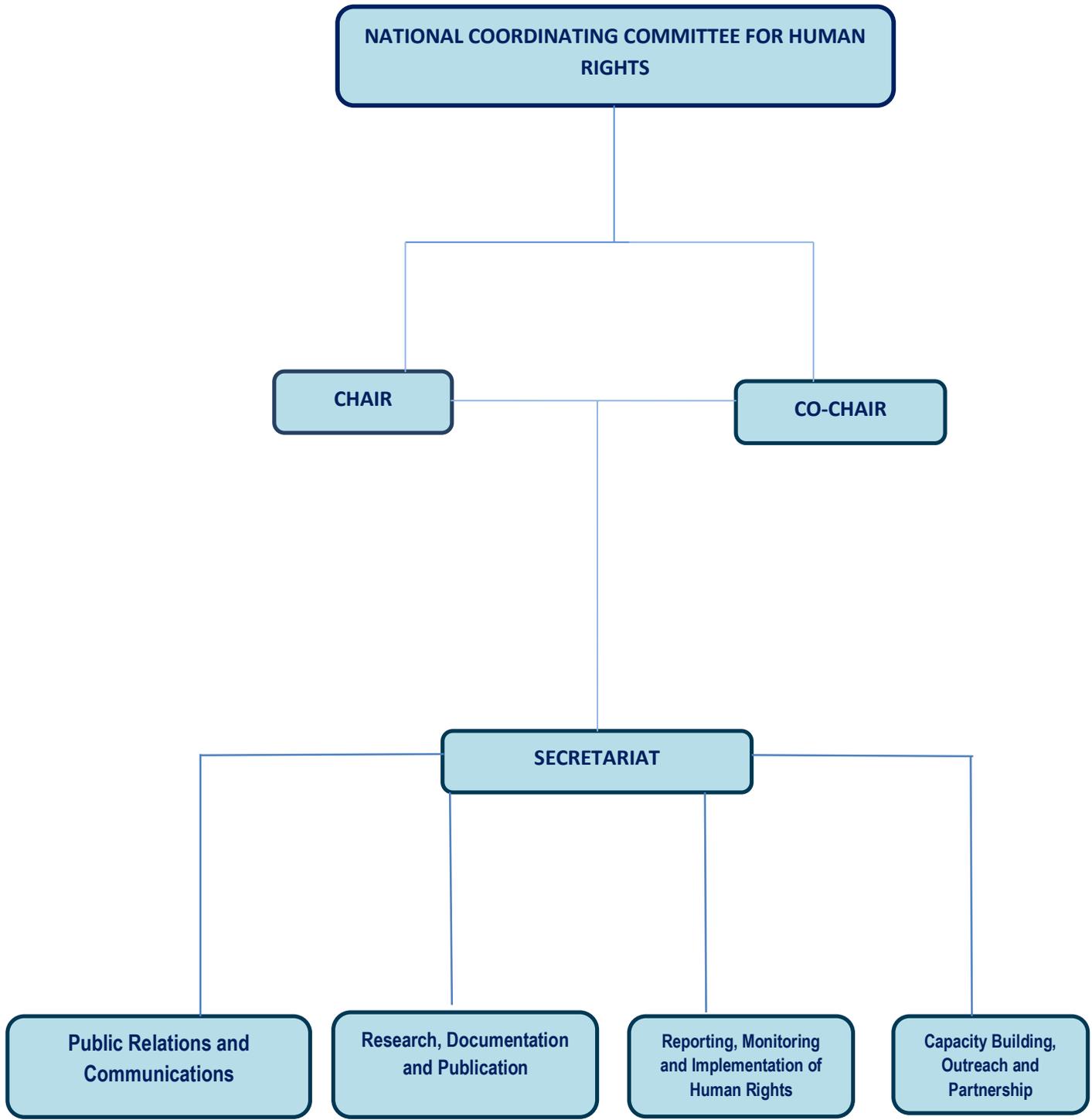


Fig 1: Organisational Structure

Composition

Given that the issue of human rights involves various actors and sectors in a society, there is a need for interagency and inter-organisational cooperation and collaboration in addressing human rights nationally. It is in this vein that the committee comprises members from respective government Ministries in addition to having non-governmental representation. The Committee's membership comprises the following:

- i. Department/ Ministry of External Affairs, Chair and Secretariat of the Committee (Focal Point for Human Rights)
- ii. Attorney General's Chambers (Solicitor General)
- iii. Division of Gender Relations (Director of Gender Relations)
- iv. Ministry of Equity, Social Justice, Empowerment, Youth Development, Sports and Local Government (Director of Human Services and the Deputy Director of Research and Policy)
- v. Immigration Department (Chief Immigration Officer)
- vi. Ministry of Home Affairs (Department of National Security: Commissioner of Police/ Department of Justice: Permanent Secretary)
- vii. Ministry of Education (Chief Education Officer)
- viii. Ministry of Health (Chief Medical Officer)
- ix. Department of Labour (Labour Commissioner)
- x. National Youth Council (1st VP for International Relations)
- xi. Department of Sustainable Development (Co-Chair of the National SDGs Coordinating Committee)
- xii. Ministry of Economic Development/Planning Division (Chair of the National SDGs Coordinating Committee)
- xiii. Parliamentary Commissioner
- xiv. Department of Statistics (Director of Statistics)
- xv. The Coalition of Civil Society Organisations(Chairman)
- xvi. National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities(President)

II.ACHIEVING THE COMMITTEE'S PURPOSE

In order to execute its mandate effectively, the key functions of the Committee have been grouped thematically into four key areas:

1. Public Relations and Communications
2. Research, Documentation and Publication

3. Reporting, Monitoring and Implementation of Human Rights

4. Capacity Building, Outreach and Partnership

These four thematic areas form the framework for the Committee’s work plan and are therefore areas by which the Committee’s performance is measured.

NCCHR Work Plan Items/Actions

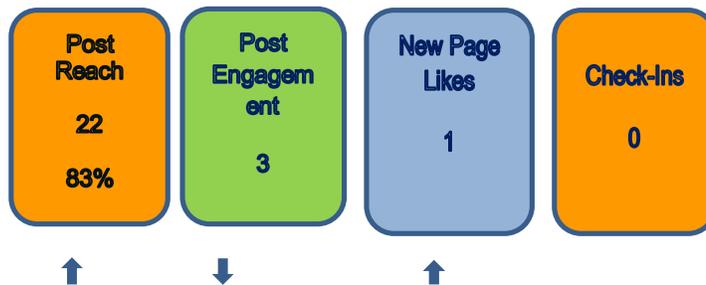
1. Public Relations and Communications

Item No. 1: Develop a Communications Plan and Strategy

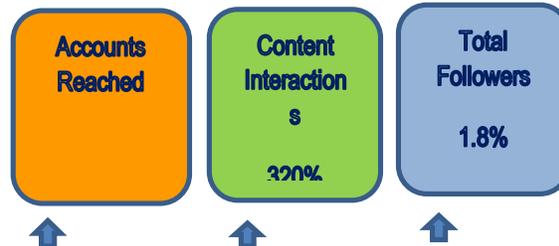
Comments: A Communications Plan and Strategy has been developed. The Plan and Strategy however have not been fully implemented due to the dearth in human resources within the Secretariat. Despite these limitations, the Secretariat has accomplished the following:

i. Developed social media pages (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) to communicate human rights information as well as the work of the Committee.

For the period from 9th November to 6th December 2020, the Facebook page has 141 likes and has realised an increase in its reach by 83%. The page’s engagement has actually decreased by 57% and there was one new page like.



For the period 23rd November 2020 to 29th November 2020, the Instagram page 226 followers which is a 1.8% increase. Eighty-nine accounts were reached, an increase by 48.3%. Twenty-one content interactions were made, which is an increase by 320%.



The Twitter page has 51 followers.

In 2021, the Committee intends to improve on its Communications Strategy, but is especially committed on the following actions items:

Internal Communications:

(a) Annual Meeting with Cabinet: The Committee envisions that consultations with Cabinet takes place annually to ensure that human rights becomes part of the discussions of Cabinet and filters down to the respective government Ministries and entities. This, the Committee anticipates will create buy-in for human rights within government agencies.

External Communications:

(a) Create a logo for the Committee: As part of the objective to make the Committee more visible, the Committee is desirous of embarking on a logo competition. This would involve engaging the public on discussions on human rights, thereby creating a sense of interest in the national discussions regarding human rights.

2. Research, Documentation and Publication

Item No.3: Create a Database of Committee Members and Alternates

Comments: The database is incomplete as the Secretariat is still awaiting submissions from Committee Members. Requests/reminders for submissions will be sent through the Permanent Secretary of the Department of External Affairs before the end of the first quarter of 2021.

Item No. 4: Create a Database of Human Rights Treaties

Comments: The database has been drafted. However, some sections have not been completed due to the inability to locate pertinent information on specific treaties online and/or the respective national entity with responsibility for the treaty has not provided the relevant information. Meetings have been requested from some of these entities and the Secretariat intends to complete the database by the first quarter of 2021. The database has been placed on the internet server of the Department of External Affairs.

Item No. 5: Create a reporting schedule for treaties

Comments: Given the sheer volume of treaties, the reporting schedule for all have not yet been determined. Further desk research is needed as well as meetings with the national entity with responsibility for the respective treaties. The Secretariat intends to complete the reporting schedule by the first quarter of 2021.

Item No.6: Create Calendar for the Committee

Comments: An annual calendar has been developed for the Committee's meetings. Committee Members are provided this information at the end of the year.

Item No 7: Produce Reports for the Committee

Comments: The first report produced by the Secretariat is its annual report. The Secretariat intends to produce other thematic reports on human rights matters in the future.

3. Reporting, Monitoring and Implementation of Human Rights

Item 1: Monitor the reporting and implementation of ratified treaties

Comments: The GOSL has ratified four treaties under the United Nations Human Rights System, namely the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)(1982); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination(CERD)(1990); the Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC)(1993); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities(CRPD)(2020).

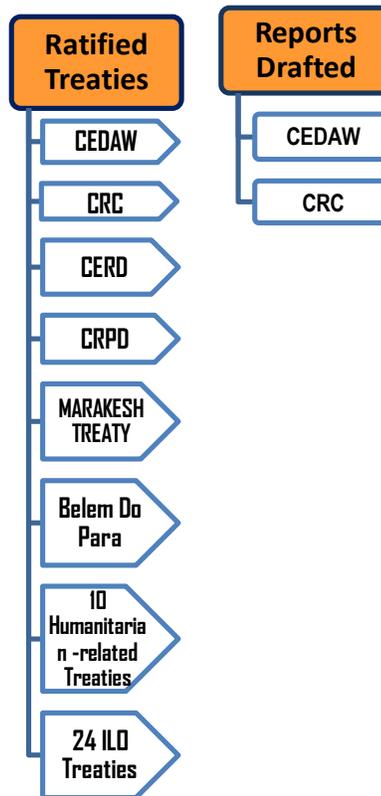


Fig 2: Snapshot of periodic treaty reports drafted and submitted by Saint Lucia

The GOSL last presented its initial to sixth report for the CEDAW in 2006. National reports are due every four years. The report is overdue by fourteen (14) years. The Department of Gender Relations, the public entity charged with responsibility for reporting on the CEDAW, commenced drafting the CEDAW report in 2019 via a multi-stakeholder process which included participants from various government entities. The report has since been completed and presented to Cabinet for final approval prior to forwarding to the Department of External Affairs for onward transmission to the United Nations Treaty Body Committee.

Despite having ratified the CERD, the GOSL has never reported on the Convention, especially since there is no designated national entity responsible for reporting on the Convention. The Secretariat however, has been in preliminary dialogue with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Office in Barbados regarding a national sensitisation and discussion on CERD with the aim of creating an

understanding of the Convention from the perspective of an Afro-Caribbean nation. Following this event, the Committee envisages determining a national entity responsible for reporting on the Convention.

The GOSL last presented its second to fourth report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in June 2014. National reports are due every five years. The report is overdue by one (1) year. The Department of Human Services, the public entity charged with responsibility for reporting on the CRC is currently in the preliminary phases of drafting the national report.

In June 2020, the GOSL ratified the CRPD and acceded to its Optional Protocol². In September of this same year, the Government also acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty³. Both treaties confer rights and offer protection to persons with disabilities. According to the reporting schedule for the CRPD, States which are now party to the treaty are expected to present an initial report two years after ratification. There does not seem to be a reporting requirement for the Marrakesh Treaty. However, further investigation and consultation will continue to determine whether this is indeed the case.

Under the Inter-American Human Rights System, which forms part of the OAS, Saint Lucia has ratified the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women / "Convention of Belem do Para" in 1995. Since then Saint Lucia has not provided a report regarding this treaty. By virtue of Saint Lucia's membership in the OAS, Saint Lucia is mandated to report upon request. Saint Lucia has therefore submitted its first report to OAS for inclusion in its Annual Human Rights Report.

Saint Lucia has ratified 24 treaties under the International Labour Organization (ILO). Current status updates on reporting to the ILO is not readily available online. The Department of Labour, the public entity responsible for reporting to the ILO, which is represented on the Committee, has not yet provided such updates. Meetings will need to be arranged with representatives of the Department of Labour to acquire this information.

Saint Lucia is party to about 10 humanitarian law-related instruments. The reporting responsibility for these *treaties has not yet been determined. Meetings have been arranged with the Saint Lucian Red Cross, one of*

² The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a side-agreement to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was adopted on 13 December 2006, and entered into force at the same time as its parent Convention on 3 May 2008. It establishes an individual complaints mechanism for the Convention which allows the Committee to consider complaints from individuals or groups who claim their rights under the Convention have been violated.

³ The Marrakesh VIP Treaty is a treaty on copyright adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 27th June 2013 administered by World Intellectual Property

the entities responsible for overseeing the monitoring of some of these instruments. These meetings are expected to take place in the new year.

Item 2: Implement the National Recommendations Tracking Database(NRTD)

Comments: The National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD) is an online tool developed by the United Nations Human Rights System to enhance States' reporting and data collection capacity and to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations deriving from the United Nations human rights mechanisms, the UPR, the Special Procedures and the Treaty Bodies. A request was made from the Human Rights Officer at the Department of External Affairs to the Minister with Responsibility for External Affairs through the Permanent Secretary in 2019. But due to a number of administrative changes it has been quite difficult to follow-up. The request will be resubmitted in the new year.

Item 3: Access Inter-American SIMORE

Comments: Inter-American SIMORE is an online tool that systematically organises the recommendations issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights through its different mechanisms: approved friendly settlement agreements, annual reports published merits reports, country reports, thematic reports and granted precautionary measures. It also allows users of the Inter-American Human Rights System to provide information on the measures adopted by the States to comply with these recommendations.

Saint Lucia participated in training in the use of the Inter-American SIMORE on 16th September 2020. Personnel from the Department of External Affairs at Capital and Saint Lucia's Mission to the OAS based in Washington DC, participated in a virtual training workshop on the Inter-American SIMORE facilitated by the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) based in Washington.

The Department of External Affairs has since submitted names to its Mission to the OAS for submission to the OAS and awaiting confirmation of submission authorisation to access the database. The names submitted included the Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary, the Human Rights Officer and Saint Lucia's Permanent Representative to the OAS.

Item 4: Seek technical assistance to facilitate the national implementation of ratified treaties

Comments: Assistance has been requested from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Barbados. The Proposal Seeking Technical Assistance to Conduct Legislative Review Ensuring Compliance with Treaties Ratified was submitted. The project proposal was accepted by the Human Rights Officer who indicated that the project can be funded through the UPR Trust Fund focusing on policy and legislative review for the CRPD given Saint Lucia's recent ratification of the Convention. Additionally, the Human Rights Officer agreed to assist the GOSL (Department of Equity) with the development of implementation plans for the CRPD and Marrakesh Treaty. The OHCHR has developed a Joint Disability Programme and will be inviting Saint Lucia to participate. This would complement the Caribbean Development Bank's disability project which is currently ongoing. The formalisation of these agreements will be concluded in 2021.

The OHCHR indicated its eagerness to continue to work with Saint Lucia as there has been increased engagement between Saint Lucia and the OHCHR since 2018.

4. Capacity Building, Outreach and Partnership

Item 1: Identify sources of training (OHCHR, Commonwealth, IAHR)

Comments: Since the inception of the Committee, several capacity building exercises have taken place to help develop the human rights capacity of the Committee, in addition to personnel within the public service and Non-Governmental Organisations in Saint Lucia. These exercises include:

- **February 2019:** The Secretariat facilitated human rights training sessions with the OHCHR in Barbados at the Inaugural Meeting of the National Coordinating Committee for Human Rights on 11th and 12th February 2019. The aim of the meeting was to assist members in understanding their roles and responsibilities on the Committee. The training took place at the Financial Centre in Saint Lucia.
- **May 2019:** The Secretariat facilitated training with the OHCHR in Barbados with national public service stakeholders and Committee members on drafting of the UPR and the CRC Reports. The training took place at the Bay Gardens Resort Saint Lucia.

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- **August 2019:** The Secretariat facilitated the virtual participation of the Committee and Non-Governmental Organisation with the IACHR Annual Seminar for CARICOM States at the George Washington University Law School “Protecting the rights of migrants and refugees under international instruments and recent developments on LGBTI rights”
 - **September 2020:** The Secretariat facilitated virtual training of the NCCHR, the Department of External Affairs at Capital and in Washington with the IACHR in Washington. The training took place on 15th September, and the aim of the training was to develop the capacity of public servants, as well as the NCCHR on the mandate and mechanisms of the IAHRs. The training is also in line with the current thrust of active engagement by the Commission with CARICOM States. The training is to resume in the first quarter of 2021.

On the 16th of September personnel from the Department of External Affairs at Capital and Saint Lucia’s Mission to the OAS based in Washington DC, participated in a virtual training workshop on the Inter-American SIMORE facilitated by the Inter IACHR based in Washington.

- **November 2020:** The Secretariat facilitated the virtual participation of the staff at the Department of External Affairs and the NCCHR in the Annual IACHR Seminar for CARICOM Countries with the George Washington School of Law on 18th November 2020. The topic for this year’s event was the Inter-American System and the COVID-19 Pandemic, Impacts on Human Rights in the Caribbean.

In early 2020, the Secretariat emailed the Commonwealth Office in Geneva, but has not received a response. The Secretariat shall continue its efforts to establish contact with the Commonwealth Office with the aim of discussing the provision of capacity building opportunities for the Committee and relevant national stakeholders.

The Secretariat has finalised the development of a Human Rights syllabus for the Department of the Public Service for inclusion in the Public Service training catalogue. The Committee believes that the inclusion of human rights in the catalogue has the potential to contribute to the development of national capacity in human rights within the Public Service. The syllabus has since been forwarded to the Department for comments.

The Committee realises that throughout the year, there was a heavy focus on capacity building initiatives and exercises, while there was no focus on the area of Outreach and Partnership. The Committee intends to develop its outreach and partnership initiatives in 2021-2022.

III. ANALYSIS OF COMMITTEE'S WORK

Strengths:

- Qualified and committed members
- Existence of a Secretariat
- Existence of Human Rights as a thematic area within the Political and Economic Division

Successes:

- Existence of the Committee placed human rights on the national agenda
- Consistent interaction with the OHCHR has placed Saint Lucia on the OHCHR agenda for 2021 and the guarantee of the provision of technical assistance
- First time engagement with the Inter-American Systems
- Six (6) training and capacity building activities with international and regional human rights organisations
- Submitted first human rights report to the IACHR

Weaknesses:

- Dearth of financial and human resources in the Secretariat
- Low participation by public service members of the Committee
- Low participation by NGOs on the Committee.
- NGOs not leveraging their position on the Committee
- Lack of consultation with Cabinet on human rights matters

Threats:

- Shifting priorities of the GOSL and the administration at the Department of External Affairs
- Change in Administration of Government
- Absence of a Succession Plan

Opportunities:

- Partnerships with human rights committees in the Caribbean
- Partnerships with National Human Rights Institutions in developed countries
- Seeking technical assistance from the Commonwealth
- Seeking technical assistance from countries active in thematic human rights issues such as Feminist Foreign Policy, Convention against Torture/Convention against Torture Initiative.

IV. NEXT STEPS 2021

The Committee will continue the activities on its Work and Communications Plans and specifically focusing on the following:

Resources:

- Acquiring human and financial resources for the Secretariat

Engagement:

- Deepen its engagement with its government membership on an individual basis to determine how to improve participation
- Deepen engagement with NGOs on the Committee to determine how best these organisations can maximize their membership on the Committee and how the work of the Committee can filter down to these NGOs membership
- Deepen engagement with Cabinet with the aim of developing human rights champions within Cabinet

Outreach and Partnerships:

- Develop partnerships with National Human Rights Committees and Institutions within the region and beyond to share best practices
- Seek technical and financial assistance from international organisations and friendly countries for the Committee and relevant national stakeholders

APPENDIX

LIST OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 2019 - 2020

Name	Designation/Organisation
Janey Joseph	Director of Gender Relations
Olivia Amos	Gender Relations Officer, Department of Gender Relations
Annette Rattigan Leo	Chief Sustainable Development and Environment Officer, Department of Sustainable Development
Natasha Lloyd- Felix	Director of Health Promotion, Ministry of Health
Kate Wilson	Legal Officer, Department of Sustainable Development
Aisha Jn Baptiste	Legal Officer, Department of External Affairs
Zizi Pitcairn	Foreign Service Officer, Department of External Affairs (special invite)
Kin-Z Francis	Foreign Service Officer, Department of External Affairs(special invite)
Irene Gaspard	Acting Permanent Secretary/Chair
Adria Rose Sonson	Permanent Secretary/Chair
Guillaume Simon	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Beverly- Ann Poyotte	Director of Human Services
Blanda Lansilo	Senior Field Social Worker, Department of Human Services
Dahna Jn Charles	Social Planner, Department of Economic Development
George Melchoir	Assistant Labour Commissioner

Eulampius Frederick	Policy and Programme Officer, Department of Equity
Leca James	Programme Officer Department of Equity, Social Justice and Empowerment
Tanzia Toussaint	Deputy Director Department of Equity, Social Justice and Empowerment
Shahini Gravillis	Policy and Programme Officer, Department of Equity, Social Justice and Empowerment
Augustus Cadette	Deputy Permanent Secretary, Department of Justice
Bernice Marcellin	HRD Officer, Department of Education and Innovation
Althea Emmanuel	HRD Officer, Department of Education and Innovation
Lescenta Desir Dolor	Commandant, Royal Saint Lucia Police Force
Wayne Charlery	Assistant Commissioner of Police. Royal Saint Lucia Police Force
Linn Brown	Head of Demography, Central Statistics Office
Natasha Joseph	Statistician, Central Statistics Office
George Charlemagne	Crown Counsel, Attorney General Chambers
Antonia Charlemagene	Crown Counsel, Attorney General Chambers
Brender Portland-Reynolds	Solicitor General, Attorney General Chambers
Yakeema	National Youth Council
Kasey Ingram	Programme Coordinator, National Youth Council
Shirlene Simmons-James	Saint Lucia National Trust
Bishnu Tulsie	Director of National Coalition of Civil Society/ Director Saint Lucia National Trust
Dr. Rosemarie Husbands-Mathurin	Parliamentary Commissioner

Merphilus James

President, National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities

Verna Khadoo/Mathurin

Department of the Public Service (special invite)