

Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power

A. Victims of Crime

- 1. "Victims" means persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws operative within Member States, including those laws proscribing criminal abuse of power.
- 2. A person may be considered a victim, under this Declaration, regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted and regardless of the familiar relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. The term "victim" also includes, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependants of the direct victim and persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimization.
- 3. The provisions contained herein shall be applicable to all, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, age, language, religion, nationality, political or other opinion, cultural beliefs or practices, property, birth or family status, ethnic or social origin, and disability.

Access to justice and fair treatment

- 4. Victims should be treated with compassion and respect for their dignity. They are entitled to access to the mechanisms of justice and to prompt redress, as provided for by national legislation, for the harm that they have suffered.
- 5. Judicial and administrative mechanisms should be established and strengthened where necessary to enable victims to obtain redress through formal or informal procedures that are expeditious, fair, inexpensive and accessible. Victims should be informed to their rights in seeking redress through such mechanisms.
- 6. The responsiveness of judicial and administrative processes to the needs of victims should be facilitated by:
- (a) Informing victims of their role and the scope, timing and progress of the proceedings and of the disposition of their cases, especially where serious crimes are involved and where they have requested such information;

- (b) Allowing the views and concerns of victims to be presented and considered appropriate stages of proceedings where their personal interests are affected, without prejudice to the accused and consistent with the relevant national criminal justice system;
 - (c) Providing proper assistance to victims throughout the legal process;
- (d) Taking measures to minimize inconvenience to victims, protect their privacy, when necessary, and ensure their safety, as well as that of their families and witnesses on their behalf, from intimidation and retaliation;
- (e) Avoiding unnecessary delay in the disposition of cases and the execution of orders or decrees granting awards to victims.
- 7. Informal mechanisms for the resolution of disputes, including mediation, arbitration and customary justice or indigenous practices, should be utilized where appropriate to facilitate conciliation and redress for victims.

Restitution

- 8. Offenders or third parties responsible for their behaviour should, where appropriate, make fair restitution to victims, their families or dependants. Such restitution should include the return of property or payment for the harm or loss suffered, reimbursement of expenses incurred as a result of the victimization, the provision of services and the restoration of rights.
- 9. Governments should review their practices, regulations and laws to consider restitution as an available sentencing option in criminal cases, in addition to other criminal sanctions.
- 10. In cases of substantial harm to the environment, restitution, if ordered, should include, as far as possible, restoration of the environment, reconstruction of the infrastructure, replacement of community facilities and reimbursement of the expenses of relocation, whenever such harm results in the dislocation of a community.

quasiofficial capacity have violated national criminal laws, the victims should receive restitution from the State whose officials or agents were responsible for the harm inflicted. In cases where the Government under whose authority the victimizing act or omission occurred is

no longer in existence, the State or Government successor in title should provide restitution to the victims.

Compensation

- 12. When compensation is not fully available from the offender or other sources, States should endeavour to provide financial compensation to:
- (a) Victims who have sustained significant bodily injury or impairment of physical or mental health as a result of serious crimes;
- (b) The family, in particular dependants of persons who have died or become physically or mentally incapacited as a result of such victimization.
- 13. The establishment, strengthening and expansion of national funds for compensation to victims should be encouraged. Where appropriate, other funds may also be established for this purpose, including those cases there the State of which the victim is a national is not in a position to compensate the victim for the harm.

Assistance

- 14. Victims should receive the necessary material, medical, psychological and social assistance through governmental, voluntary, community based and indigenous means.
- 15. Victims should be informed of the availability of health and social services and other relevant assistance and be readily afforded access to them.
- 16. Police, justice, health, social service and other personnel concerned should receive training to sensitize them to the needs of victims, and guidelines to ensure proper and prompt aid.
- 17. In providing services and assistance to victims, attention should be given to those who have special needs because of the nature of the harm inflicted or because of factors such as those mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

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