General Assembly Meeting

Assembly Meeting

Friday 2nd September 2022

14.00-16.00h (time zone: SAST/CEST)

Hybrid: Future Africa Auditorium, University of Pretoria/

Zoom meeting

Member Institutes Present 2022:

* Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Serbia
* Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford, UK
* Center for Human Rights Science, Carnegie Mellon University, USA
* Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York, UK
* Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights (CCJHR), University College Cork, Ireland
* Centre for Fundamental Rights, Hertie School, Germany
* Centre for Human Rights Research, University of Manitoba, Canada
* Centre for Human Rights Studies, University of Zurich (UZHR), Switzerland
* Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa
* Centre for Research and Development of Constitution and Human Rights, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia
* Centre for the Study of Human Rights Law, University of Strathclyde, UK
* Centre for the Study of Human Rights, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK
* Czech Center for Human Rights and Democracy (CCHRD), Czech Republic
* Department of Human Rights, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland
* Department of National and Supranational Public Law, University of Milan, Italy
* Dullah Omar Institute, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
* Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights, University of Helsinki, Finland
* European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, University of Graz, Austria
* Global Campus of Human Rights, Italy
* Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh, UK
* Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, Sheffield Hallam University, UK
* Human Rights Institute, Binghamton University, USA
* Human Rights Law Centre, University of Nottingham, UK
* Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa, Canada
* Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University, Finland
* International Law and Human Rights Unit, University of Liverpool, UK
* Maastricht Centre for Human Rights, the Netherlands
* Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM), University of Utrecht, the Netherlands
* Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, Norway
* Pedro Arrupe Institute of Human Rights of the University of Deusto, Spain
* Poznan Human Rights Centre, Poland
* Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Sweden
* School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
* UCD Centre for Human Rights, University College Dublin, Ireland

# Member Institutes Represented by AHRI Chair 2022 (by proxy):

* Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Monash University, Australia
* Centre for Human Rights and Peace, University of Nairobi, Kenya
* Centre for Human Rights, Ghent University, Belgium
* European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano (EURAC), Italy
* Instituto de Democracia y Derechos Humanos de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú/ Institute of Democracy and Human Rights (IDEHPUCP), Peru
* Law and Development Research Group, University of Antwerp, Belgium
* Minerva Center for Human Rights, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
* Sussex Centre for Human Rights Research, UK
* UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg

Apologies:

* [Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law of the Washington College of Law, American University](https://www.wcl.american.edu/hracademy/), USA
* Centre for Human Rights Erlangen-Nürnberg (CHREN), Germany
* Chang Fo-chuan Center for the Study of Human Rights, Sowchos University, Taiwan
* Department for Human Rights and Politics, Institute for Political and International Studies, ELTE University Budapest, Hungary
* Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, University of Geneva, Switzerland
* Human Rights Centre, Queen's University Belfast, UK
* Human Rights Centre, University of Potsdam, Germany
* Human Rights Implementation Centre, University of Bristol, UK
* [Irish Centre for Human Rights](http://www.nuigalway.ie/human_rights/), National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland
* Newcastle Forum for Human Rights & Social Justice, UK

New Membership Applicant Institutes present:

* Centre for Human Rights, Birmingham City University, UK

1. **Welcome**

The Chair warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting, in-person and online. There is a busy agenda and limited time but as much detail as possible will be given on each item.

1. **Adoption of agenda**

**DECISION:** Agenda adopted.

1. **Approval of minutes from Assembly Meeting on Friday 27th August 2021 (Annex 1)**

The draft minutes were shared in advance. The chair invited any corrections. No corrections.

**DECISION:** Minutes approved.

1. **Report of the Chair**

The chair reported that, since our last assembly meeting, the Secretariat and Executive Committee have continued to work to streamline the different finance and legal documentation surrounding our incorporation as an international organisation.

The chair noted that those visiting the AHRI website or reading the monthly newsletter will also have noticed changes, such as the addition of recent publications and population of the website with further photos, and we plan to implement a new calendar of events hosted by AHRI member institutes in the coming months.

The chair gave an update on the Executive Committee meeting yesterday. The key items addressed were the impending end of the Secretariat’s second term in office, the structure of the Executive Committee in the context of ensuring healthy turnover on the Committee, strengthening governance in line with general good practice and legal requirements, and the manageability of a large ExCo. All proposals will be put forward as they appear on the agenda for today’s meeting.

1. **Financial Statements (Annex 2a & b)**

The AHRI financial year runs from end of July to end of June. This bridges two membership fee income years. The statement is contained in Annex 2 a.

The chair also drew attention to Annex 2 b from the Maastricht conference and then invited questions.

It has still being challenging to manage the payment of fees. Representatives are encouraged to double check with their administrative contacts.

Fifty-one members have paid invoices for last year, and thirty-one for this year.

The chair gave an update on finances since the end of the financial year. The balance was 4,608 euros as at 30 June 2022.

This included a number of retrospective and prospective fee payments.

1. **Admission of New Members (1 application) (Annex 3 a & b)**

The Chair invited the representative from Birmingham City University’s Centre for Human Rights, UK, to introduce themselves and their institute and the motivations for joining AHRI, and to respond to any questions arising.

Prof. Jon Yorke, Director of the Centre, introduced the Centre and its work. Dr Rebecca Smyth was also present at the meeting and will act as the Official Representative of the Centre for Human Rights.

There was one specific comment from the floor and expression of interested in the work of the Centre. This will be followed up in a one-to-one conversation.

Members were invited to show support via Zoom reactions and to raise hands in the room.

The Birmingham City University’s Centre for Human Rights was warmly welcomed by the Assembly.

The chair thanked everyone and expressed a final welcome to the new member.

**DECISION:** The membership of the Centre for Human Rights was confirmed.

1. **AHRI Secretariat hosting proposal 2023-2026 (Annex 4)**

The chair was delighted to confirm that Prof. Magnus Killander and the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria has stepped in propose to host the Secretariat for a three year term.

The chair invited questions. There were no questions from the floor.

Members were invited to show support via Zoom reactions and to raise hands in the room.

The Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria was unanimously approved and applauded.

The chair highlighted that the processes that have been put in place over the preceding years has been designed to facilitate the Secretariat role, and the longevity of AHRI depends on members being willing to put themselves forward to take this on. Members are invited to start considering whether they could host. A new Vice-Chair should be elected at the Assembly meeting in 2023.

**DECISION:** The Centre for Human Rights will assume the Secretariat hosting in September 2023.

1. **Executive Committee proposal**

According to AHRI’s Articles of Association there is a need for a minimum of six members of the Executive Committee, but the current membership is much larger. We have been examining how best to approach this in line with AHRI’s reporting obligations as an International Association since any changes to membership of the governance committee must be notified in line with the relevant process under Belgian law, and this has a financial cost attached.

In August 2021 and March 2022, the Secretariat produced discussion documents and a proposal for consideration by the Executive Committee. As the Articles of Association require six members at a minimum and no maximum, but the bank and the Belgian registration system require extensive paperwork and the payment of fees each time there is a change, the proposal is to identify six members of the Committee for legal purposes and thus be the only ones subject to paperwork filing. It is proposed that the six members include the Chair, Vice Chair/Treasurer, Secretary, a member with agency to assist with the bank account in Belgium, and two additional members.

In March 2022, the Executive Committee agreed with this approach and agreed that it should come forward to the 2022 Assembly.

At yesterday’s meeting, the Executive Committee agreed on the following membership proposal: The six members suggested for the Executive Committee are the Chair and Executive Secretary, Magnus Killander (incoming Vice-Chair), Manfred Nowak, Felipe Gomez-Isa, Jan Wouters (Belgian contact).

It is then proposed that the remaining members of the Committee will resign and be reconstituted into a wider group, named the ‘Executive Board’.

In practice, there will be no changes to the functioning of the Committee. The difference will be that only six members will need to deal with the paperwork to keep AHRI compliant with Belgian requirements and minimise the time and cost of filing legal documents. This would then also be adjusted on the website.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Representative**  | **Name of Institution** | **Elected for 3 years from:**  |
| Kasey McCall-SmithAHRI Chair | Global Justice Academy, UK | 2020 |
| Elaine WebsterAHRI Executive Secretary | Centre for the Study of Human Rights Law, UK | 2020 |
| Magnus KillanderAHRI Vice-Chair | Centre for Human Rights, South Africa | 2021 |
| Jan Wouters | Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, Belgium | 2021 |
| Manfred Nowak | Global Campus of Human Rights, Italy | 2020 |
| Felipe Gomez | Pedro Arrupe Institute of Human Rights, Spain  | 2020 |

The Assembly is asked to accept the resignation of everyone on the Committee except the six members, and everyone else will be moved to the new Executive Board, where existing terms would run out. The chair read out the list of names of the current Executive Committee members and when their terms are due to end.

**DECISION:** proposal approved and resignations accepted. The current members of the Executive Committee are:

1. **Election of Executive Committee and Board members (Annex 5)**

As the creation of the Executive Board is a new policy, it is proposed that the current term should count as a first term.

The creation of the Board is also an opportunity to address turnover in the Committee in the interests of robust governance, and to stagger terms more effectively in order to ensure a mix of experienced and new members.

It is also proposed that, after an initial terms, the members being formally elected to the new Executive Board today will be able to stand for a further term. After this, members would be obliged to stand down for at least one full term, after which they would be eligible for re-election.

This proposal was discussed at the Executive Committee meeting yesterday. After any discussion or changes today, it will be made available on the website.

Members were invited to show support via Zoom reactions and to raise hands in the room. There was a clear majority in favour of the policy.

**DECISION:** Executive Board membership policy adopted.

**ACTION:** The Secretariat will add the policy to the website and update the Executive Committee and Board members on the website

The chair clarified that membership of the Executive Committee (and Board) is a personal appointment. This clarification impacted three members who had taken over from colleagues. Two have decided to stand down and one would like to continue.

Bård Andreas Andreasson (Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, Norway) and Pernille Boye-Koch (Danish Institute for Human Rights, Denmark) will stand down. Ingrid Westendorp (Maastricht Centre for Human Rights, the Netherlands) will also be standing down.

Melissa Castan (Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Monash University, Australia) had taken over from her former colleague. She would like to stand now in her own capacity. She could not be here today because of the time zone difference. The chair introduced Prof. Castan to the Assembly.

Two new members have also indicated intention to stand for membership:

Thomas Bundschuh from the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, University of Sheffield, UK, provided an introduction to his research and teaching interests and his motivation for joining the Executive Board.

The chair also shared that Eva Maria Lassen from the Danish Institute for Human Rights is standing for election. The chair introduced Dr Lassen, noting that she had formerly been AHRI’s Executive Secretary.

The chair invited nominations from the floor. No further nominations were received.

Members were invited to show support via Zoom reactions and to raise hands in the room. All were welcomed to the Executive Board.

The chair noted a special vote of thanks to those who would be stepping down.

**DECISION:** The following are now members of the Executive Board:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Representative**  | **Name of Institution** | **Elected for 3 years from:** |
| Elizabeth Salmon | The Institute of Democracy and Human Rights, Peru | 2020 |
| Michael Lysander Fremuth | Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights, Austria | 2020 |
| Alejandro Fuentes | Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Sweden | 2020 |
| Roman Wieruszewski | Poznan Human Rights Centre, Poland | 2021 |
| Vesna Petrovic | Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Serbia | 2021 |
| Suzanne Egan | UCD Centre for Human Rights, Ireland | 2021 |
| Viviana Fernandez  | Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa, Canada | 2021 |
| Aoife Nolan | Human Rights Law Centre, University of Nottingham, UK | 2021 |
| Melissa Castan | Castan Centre for Human Rights, Australia | 2022 |
| Thomas Bundschuh | Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, UK | 2022 |
| Eva Maria Lassen | The Danish Institute for Human rights, Denmark | 2022 |

1. **AHRI Conference 2023 and 2024**

The chair reminded attendees that the 2023 conference was due to take place at the University of Deusto, Spain.

The conference dates will be 7th-9th September 2023.

Felipe Gomez-Isa gave an update on planning. An overview had been circulated to the Executive Committee prior to the meeting. A key difference will be that, in place of a doctoral workshop, there will be an encounter of human rights defenders. Sponsorship has already been secured. The call for papers will be publicised in February or March 2023. The intention is to host in both English and Spanish and to have four conference tracks. The chair thanked the Pedro Arrupe Institute.

In relation to the 2024 conference, the chair noted that two expressions of interest had been received and thanked all colleagues who had prepared these. Both were discussed at the Executive Committee meeting the previous day. Both of the expressions of interest were submitted by institutes represented by two Executive Committee members; one was not present and the other left the meeting while the proposals were discussed.

The Executive Committee had agreed that the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Lund, Sweden) would be invited to host the 2024 conference.

Alejandro Fuentes, on behalf of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, thanked the Executive Committee and the AHRI membership for the opportunity to host the conference. The theme would be: ‘Realizing Human Rights in the Green and Just

Transition’. It will be a multidisciplinary conference. Lund University and the Institute have a current research priority in the area of human rights, climate change and environmental law. Lund has been designated as the host city for a new national human rights institution in Sweden and is one of two cities in Sweden that has been declared as a human rights city. In 2024 it will be the 40th anniversary of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and an opportunity to celebrate with friends from AHRI. It will be 10 years since the conference will has been hosted in Scandinavia, at the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The aim is to host in September or October 2024, and to try to avoid overlap with other major conferences in Europe.

The chair again thanked all who had submitted an expression of interest.

The chair reminded all attendees that members should get in touch if they are interested in hosting an event ‘in association with AHRI’ (see AHRI’s Communications Note on the website).

**ACTION:** Any members who would be interested in hosting an event ‘in association with AHRI’ are invited to contact the Secretariat.

1. **Project partnership proposal, The Graphix Project (Annex 6)**

AHRI received a partnership proposal for this project (information circulated; Annex 6). This was discussed at the Executive Committee (Board) yesterday. It is an invitation for member institute colleagues to get involved. We, as AHRI, are not involved in the substance of the research, but simply facilitating access to potential participants via our communications and network. The project was deemed to be in line with AHRI’s ethos of connecting and networking.

**ACTION:** the Executive Secretary will share the information and contact details by email.

1. **AHRI Working Groups updates**

Research: Alejandro Fuentes provided an update. One of the working group members, Thomas Bundschuh, has prepared a concept note on a particular research topic that has been identified as an important theme, related to climate change and the right to a healthy environment. Views will be sought from the Executive Committee. Anyone will be welcome to join. There has also been discussion of ‘In Association with AHRI’ seminars hosted by member institutes.

Institutional development: Viviana Fernandez provided an update. It is likely that this group will not continue identifying general funding sources, but instead pursue specific avenues of cooperation. The group may also explore a number of other additional initiatives. Michael Lysander Fremuth also provided an update on productive discussions with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (AHRI Observer Member). There is interest in cooperating on events and becoming engaged in further exchanges with AHRI.

AHRI history: Manfred Nowak provided an update. The text has gone back to the 1980s and has required significant work and input from various colleagues. The full draft will be reviewed. There remain some gaps, for example in relation to certain conferences. All members, and in particular past conference hosts, will be invited to fill in any gaps or corrections. The Secretariat is invited in particular to add some information on the growth in the number of AHRI members. After this, it will be published on the website and also possibly in the form of a publication. This will be discussed in the Executive Board.

Human Rights Education: Elaine Webster provided an update. This is currently the largest of the working groups. An initial call has been held and a survey circulated to the current group members to gather information on ambitions for the group. The discussion on potential clinical human rights education collaboration was ongoing; a group of students from the Centre for the Study of Human Rights Law at the University of Strathclyde collected data from members (although only a small number responded) and from publicly available information online. This will be discussed in the working group, alongside other suggestions based on the outcome of the survey.

AHRI publications: The chair gave an overview of the books published, or in preparation, with the AHRI series with Edward Elgar.

The chair reminded attendees to get in touch if there is interest in contributing to a working group.

**ACTION:** Anyone interested in joining a working group should email the Executive Secretary.

**ACTION:** The concept note from the Research working group will be publishedin the cloud folder with today’s Agenda and Annex documents.

1. **Open discussion: Future directions for AHRI as an international non-profit association**

Jan Wouters recalled the motivation of establishing AHRI as an international association: to ensure limited liability of the members and to enable AHRI to apply for funding, or participate in projects, undertake consultancy, support dissemination as a partner within projects, etc.

AHRI has now had legal personality since 2020. There is an organisational bank account in Belgium. The seat is in Leuven because the Belgian legislation requires a seat in Belgium. There are certain constraints and obligations, such as filing a tax declaration and keeping financial records. It is important to consider how to make the most of this status, and what the next steps might be for AHRI as an international non-profit organisation.

The chair invited discussion.

There was a suggestion from the floor to use the time at conferences to develop specific proposals.

There was a question about the logistics of AHRI being a partner in particular projects, and the administrative burden that this might entail in addition to that on individual member institutes.

The experience of the Global Campus of Human Rights was shared, as an international association under Italian Law. There is potential for AHRI to have a comparative advantage in funding bids due to the large size of the network, which AHRI should make use of. It was suggested that this question should be given further consideration.

**ACTION:** Anyone interested in examining this in greater detail is invited to do so as part of one of the existing working groups (the institutional cooperation and development working group, and/or the research working group). Colleagues within member institutes are invited to contact the Executive Secretary if they would like to be added to a working group.

1. **Next meeting**

The next Assembly will take place during the Bilbao conference (7th-9th September 2023).

1. **AOB.**
2. **Ingrid Westendorp retirement:**

The chair noted a special vote of thanks to Ingrid Westendorp, who was retiring and stepping down from the Executive Committee. Ingrid was a long standing member of the Committee and recently the vice-chair of AHRI. She has been instrumental in supporting the financial and tax obligations of AHRI as an International Association. Our sincere thanks are to Ingrid for her contribution.

1. **LinkedIn:**

AHRI now has a LinkedIn account. The aim is to be more active on this forum.

**ACTION:** members are invited to connect with the AHRI LinkedIn account.

1. **Pretoria Declaration:**

The conference hosts have prepared a declaration related to the theme of the conference (Human Rights and Technology). A draft had been circulated amongst the Executive Committee and comments were received. This was shared at the start of this meeting in the cloud folder with the agenda and annexes.

**ACTION:** attendees are invited to submit any comments today via email. The Declaration will be adopted at the final conference session tomorrow.

Minutes taken by Elaine Webster

Executive Secretary