



DPA Constitutional Focal Point

Constitutional Assistance and Support Provided by DPA

The Constitutional Focal Point (CFP) of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA) is an initiative dedicated to strengthening DPA's capacity to provide constitutional guidance and support to UN missions, desks, and Member States. The CFP was established in 2013 in response to increased demand for UN assistance in constitution-making processes which has had concrete implications for the Department and its work on political transitions. The CFP is based in the Policy and Mediation Division, Mediation Support Unit (MSU).

The CFP's effort to strengthen DPA's institutional capacity to provide consistent and coordinated constitutional support centers on six pillars:

- (1) contributing to new **UN policies and approaches** to providing constitutional assistance;
- (2) developing practical **resources and tools**;
- (3) strengthening UN system-wide **coordination**;
- (4) providing **capacity building and awareness raising** programs on constitution making themes, events, and practices;
- (5) strengthening UN relationships with **external actors** providing constitutional assistance and leveraging their capacities to support UN efforts; and
- (6) providing direct **technical constitutional support** to the UN field and headquarters officers, and Member States.

Examples of Services Offered by the CFP

Identification of Experts: The CFP assists UN field staff and headquarters officers to identify short and long term constitutional experts. The CFP has access to a wide network of academics and practitioners.

Access to Guidance, Lessons Learned and Best Practices: The CFP in partnership with UNDP oversees *Constitutionmaker*, an online tool that will serve as a repository of knowledge and lessons learned from UN constitutional support missions. The website will also provide field officers with option papers and guidance on approaches to providing constitutional support. The website was launched in 2014, but these documents are readily available upon request to the CFP.

Assessment and Strategic Planning Missions: The CFP is available to conduct constitutional assessment missions to help explore the circumstances under which the UN should provide constitutional support, and strategic planning exercises to help Missions design, implement, and/or refine their constitutional assistance strategies.

Assistance Missions: The CFP is available to provide direct technical assistance based on international comparative practice to constitution making officials, civil society, and other national actors upon the request of UN field entities. In providing this assistance the CFP is able to draw upon the services of the MSU Standby Team of Experts. (See, https://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/standby_team)

CFP Highlights:

Direct Constitutional Support: Since 2013 the CFP participated in assistance missions to Liberia, Libya and Sierra Leone, (the latter two conducted jointly with UNDP) and additionally provided remote assistance to BNUB, UNAMI, UNSOM, the Special Envoy to Yemen, UNDP Country Office in Egypt, and DPA regional divisions.

System Wide Coordination and Information-sharing: The CFP participates in an informal coordination structure comprised of DPA, DPKO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, and UN Women dedicated to information sharing and making UN constitutional support to Member States more effective and efficient.

Constitution Making Newsletter:

To this date, four editions of the system-wide quarterly newsletter on UN constitutional assistance have been published. The newsletter contains reports from UN Missions and Country Teams providing constitution support, articles on constitution making themes and practices, and a digest of recently published topical papers. (Subscribe at: constitutionmaker@un.org)

Capacity Building at HQ: To engage UN staff in current debates and developments in this area, the CFP, in coordination with other UN agencies and DPA divisions, conducts regular seminars and events on emerging constitutional issues. The Constitutions Seminars Series in 2013 included a session on constitutional developments in Libya, reports on on-going UN assistance in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Somalia, and an event on social media, technology, and constitution making in partnership with IPI. The CFP has also arranged closed off-the-record briefings for DPA officers with constitutional subject matter experts.

For further information or assistance please contact the DPA Constitutional Focal Point, Mr. Rohan Edrisinha at edrisinha@un.org