Executive Summary

2015 was a year of intense activity for the PNHRC.

2015 marked Portugal’s first year as a member of the Human Rights Council (HRC). This membership required careful consultation between the members of the PNHRC on multiple human rights issues that were addressed in resolutions or debates in this United Nations body.

Throughout 2015, Portugal actively participated in the HRC sessions through oral interventions in the plenary general debates and interactive dialogues. Portugal also organized, together with other States and NGOs, side events on key human rights issues, such as on the Application of Standards on ESCR into domestic law – justifiability of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, at the 29th session of the HRC. Furthermore, Portugal tabled, in the 28th and 29th HRC sessions, a resolution on economic, social and cultural rights and a resolution on the right to education. Both resolutions were adopted by consensus with a high number of cosponsors from all Regional Groups. Moreover, Portugal joined other States and jointly presented resolutions on non-discrimination of people with leprosy and on HIV/AIDS.

At the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly, Portugal tabled, with Moldova and Senegal, its biannual resolution on “policies and programmes involving youth”, also adopted by consensus and widely cosponsored.

The close collaboration between all the relevant PNHRC members in the different subjects was essential for what was accomplished in the HRC and the UNGA 3rd Committee.

In the course of 2015 the PNHRC was responsible for a number of other significant events that are worth highlighting:

- the consideration of the 8th and 9th Portuguese reports on the implementation of the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Geneva, 28th October 2015);

- the organization of Seminar, at the request of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, on best practises on inter-ministerial coordination on Human Rights issues for a delegation from the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (Lisbon, 11th and 12th May 2015);

- the participation in a Seminar for members of the Community of the Portuguese-Speaking Countries/CPLP (Brasilia, 23rd and 24th July 2015) where Portugal presented the PNHRC’s work in the context of the Universal Periodic Review of the HRC.
Furthermore, the PNHRC continued to develop national human rights indicators and to draft Portugal’s national reports for the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies, the signature and ratification of International Human Rights Instruments.

The 2015 PNHRC Annual Report aims to present the Committee and its work.

This report encompasses two parts:

The first part includes a brief description of PNHRC’s activities. It addresses the meetings held in plenary and working group formats, as well as other activities such as the continued cooperation with civil society, the awareness raising activities undertaken by the PNHRC on Human Rights issues (internet, facebook, etc) and the work done on human rights indicators.

The second part includes best practises in the field of Human Rights undertaken by the PNHRC members (Foreign Affairs, Finance, Defence, Internal Administration, Justice, Economy, Agriculture and Sea, Environment, Territorial Organization and Energy, Health, Education and Science, Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Culture, Migration, Gender Equality, Youth and Sports and Statistics):

- Foreign Affairs: promoting the national initiatives at the UN human rights fora, such as the resolution on the right to education at the 29th session of the Human Rights Council. Collaboration with the Human Rights Council Special Procedures;

- Finance: increasing financial support from the social services of the public administration to education and in cases of urgent and severe need;

- Defense: organization of conferences on gender related issues in order to fight gender discrimination and promote the reconciliation of professional, family and personal life of military men and women of the armed forces;

- Internal Administration: establishment of protocols with relevant institutions to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their right to security;

- Justice: awareness-raising activities to prevent sexual assault of children such as the celebration of the European day against exploitation and sexual assault of children and a meeting on the subject of protecting child from sexual assault and exploitation;

- Economy: awareness-raising activities among enterprises on several subjects such as best practices on Corporate Social Responsibility and on preventing Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as donation of goods seized in criminal proceedings and administrative offense;

- Agriculture and Sea: distribution of fruit and vegetables to children in primary schools twice a day, covering 144,488 beneficiaries;
- Environment, Territorial Organization and Energy: exploring alternative ways of preserving the human right to access to water and sanitation for families in need and, at the same time, ensuring the economic and financial viability of the entities providing those services;

- Health: development of the "card of the person with a rare disease" to make access to the relevant information regarding persons with the rare diseases easier in case of medical emergency;

- Education and Science: providing a “Portuguese as a Foreign Language” course to newly arrived migrant students with a different mother tongue;

- Labour, Solidarity and Social Security: development of informative leaflets in different formats regarding the rights of persons with disabilities in elections;

- Culture: development of digital books in the daisy format to improve blind persons’ access to digital information;

- Migrations: implementation of the Mentoring Programme for Immigrants to promote integration of migrants in the Portuguese society by providing them with orientation and support;

- Gender equality and citizenship: realization of workshops and distribution of guidelines on "education and gender equality" to education professionals to promote an education free from gender stereotypes;

- Youth and Sports: development of the project “Recados & Companhia” to promote intergerational dialogue and cooperation by creating a voluntary support net to provide home support for people with 65 or more years old in a situation of isolation;

- Statistics: actualization of statistical indicators for the consideration of the 8th and 9th reports on the implementation of the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (28th October 2015) and the preparation of the 15th to 17 reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination.