

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

Introduction

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a human rights mechanism created by the General Assembly in 2006 and implemented from 2008.



Universal: All UN Member States, without exception, are reviewed in an equal (the same time is allocated for the review of all States), and transparent manner and through a collaborative dialogue



Periodic: Each State is reviewed every four and a half years.



Review: This mechanism reviews the fulfilment of each State's human rights obligations and commitments.

The Universal Periodic Review is conducted by the States themselves, through the Working Group on the UPR composed of the 47 Member States of the Human Rights Council. That is why it is called a peer review. Thus, it is an intergovernmental mechanism subject to political and diplomatic considerations, unlike treaty bodies or special procedures composed of independent experts.

The UPR Working Group meets three times a year for two-week sessions

How does the UPR work?

The UPR mechanism can be presented as a 4-step cycle repeating itself every 4.5 years.

1) Preparation of information towards the review



The review relies on 3 documents:

- National report

- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) compilation of United Nations information (treaty bodies, special procedures and other mechanisms and agencies)
- Summary of stakeholders' submissions (National Human Rights Institution - NHRI, NGO etc.) prepared by OHCHR

These documents should describe the normative and institutional human rights framework in the State concerned, as well as the measures implemented to meet its human rights obligations and commitments. They should also identify progress made, best practices, challenges and constraints encountered since the last review.

- Documentation by country - <https://tinyurl.com/4vwy3tw5>

2) Session of the working group on the UPR

The Working Group conducts the review in a 3-hour session in the form of an interactive dialogue between the State under review and the Member and Observer States of the Council. During this dialogue, the reviewing States can ask questions and make recommendations to the State under review. In turn, the State under review presents the information gathered for the review, answers questions and responds to recommendations. The troika, a group of 3 Council members, facilitates each review.

After the dialogue, the troika prepares the report of the review, containing a summary of the discussions, recommendations and commitments made by the State under review. This report is then adopted by the Working Group.

3) Adoption of the final document at Human Rights Council session



The outcome document is adopted at the next regular session of the Human Rights Council. At this session, the State under review may submit further information and comments on the recommendations made during the review and indicate which ones it supports. Member and Observer States of the Council may also submit general observations on the document before its adoption.

4) Follow-up to the review



Once the review is over, the next step is to implement the recommendations of the review by the next UPR review of the State. This is primarily the responsibility of the State under review, but other actors such as civil society and the international community also have a role to play. A voluntary fund has been set up to assist States in this task.

- [More information on the voluntary fund for financial and technical assistance in the implementation of the UPR](#)

The State may also submit a mid-term report to inform the Council on the implementation of the recommendations and the evolution of the human rights situation.

- [List of mid-term reports](#) - <https://tinyurl.com/2p9bm629>

Opportunities for action by FIACAT and the ACATs

1) Contributing to the preparation of information for the review



NGOs can provide an individual report of 2815 words or a joint report of 5630 words according to the [timetable](#) established by the OHCHR. These reports allow NGOs to identify issues and concerns that would not be addressed in the State report. Thus, field experience is a crucial asset to enable the UPR to better understand the reality of the country under review. It is advisable to organise the alternative report by theme, following the following format for each theme:

- Reference to the recommendations of the previous UPR cycle
- Information on the evolution of the human rights situation in law and in practice
- Suggested recommendations to be addressed to the State under Review

NGOs can also contribute to the preparation of the national report by taking part in consultations organised by the State.

** Participating in the pre-sessions**

Since 2012, the NGO UPR Info has organised pre-sessions in Geneva before each session of the UPR Working Group, in order to facilitate the participation of NGOs and NHRIs in this process. On average, 6 representatives of NGOs and NHRIs working on each country to be reviewed at the session intervene (for 5 to 7 min each) during these pre-sessions to inform States of their concerns and suggest recommendations. States can then ask them questions to obtain additional information.

In parallel to the participation of the ACATs in these pre-sessions, FIACAT accompanies them during their stay in Geneva for bilateral advocacy meetings with permanent missions in Geneva, in order to ensure the relay of their concerns and recommendations. It is also recommended to make this same advocacy with the embassies in the country under review since they are consulted by their ministries and therefore also intervene in the proposal of concerns and recommendations that will be addressed during the review.

2) Attending the sessions of the UPR Working Group



As an NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC, FIACAT can attend but not speak during the dialogue. FIACAT can accredit other NGOs, such as ACATs, to attend the debate. It is also possible for NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC to organise side-events at the UPR Working Group sessions. However, the impact of these side-events is limited since, in practice, the reviewing States have already decided at that time which concerns and recommendations they will raise.

3) Intervening during the adoption of the outcome document by the Human Rights Council



NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC can make a 2-minute oral statement during this interactive dialogue on the UPR.

While these interventions do not take place until too late to influence the outcome of the review, they do provide an opportunity to express an opinion on the issues that were or were not addressed during the review and on the recommendations that the State did or did not endorse.

4) Contributing to the follow-up of the UPR

The first role that civil society can play in the follow-up to the review is to disseminate the recommendations at the national level both to the authorities and to the population. It can also help the State to put in place the necessary reforms to implement the recommendations. To this end, it is advisable to set up a civil society action plan for follow-up and to encourage the State to establish one itself. NGOs are thus responsible for monitoring the human rights situation and the implementation of recommendations. They can inform the OHCHR of developments through the submission of a mid-term report. Finally, NGOs can contribute directly to the implementation of the recommendations by carrying out projects to that end. For example, FIACAT relies heavily on UPR and treaty bodies recommendations when designing and implementing its programmes with the ACATs.

Find out more

- [Presentation of the Universal Periodic Review - OHCHR Handbook for Civil Society](#) - <https://tinyurl.com/mr2v5w65>

