

Universal Periodic Review (Fourth Cycle): Information and guidelines for relevant stakeholders' written submissions

I. Background

1. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the Human Rights Council is a unique process established in 2006 which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. The UPR is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations. As one of the main features of the Council, the UPR is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed. The ultimate aim of this mechanism is to improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations wherever they occur. Currently, no other universal mechanism of this kind exists. *(Further information on the 3rd UPR cycle tools, contact information and links to important documents are listed in Chapter V of this document)*

The UPR review is based on 3 documents:

1. The National Report by the State under Review
2. The Compilation of UN information (containing information in reports by treaty bodies, special procedures as well as submissions by UN Country Teams and UN entities)
3. The Summary of Stakeholders' Submissions (containing information in submissions by national human rights institutions, civil society organisations and regional human rights mechanisms)

The review is furthermore based on:

- a) The Charter of the United Nations;
- b) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- c) Human rights instruments to which a State is party;
- d) Voluntary pledges and commitments made by States, including those undertaken when presenting their candidatures for election to the Human Rights Council; and
- e) Applicable international humanitarian law.

2. In its resolution 16/21, the Human Rights Council reaffirms the basis, principles and objectives of the universal periodic review as originally set forth in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, and further provides clarification on the focus and documentation to be used during the review. One of the main objectives of the review is the improvement of the human rights situation on the ground.

3. Resolution 16/21 (12 April 2011) determines that the second and subsequent cycles of the review (2012 and onwards) should focus on, inter alia, the implementation of accepted recommendations and the developments of the human rights situation in the State under review. Relevant stakeholders are therefore encouraged to include in their contributions information on the follow-up to the preceding review, as well as on developments or relevant issues not addressed during previous reviews.

II. Written submission contribution

A. Content

4. Submissions must contain credible and reliable information on the human rights situation in the State under Review, highlight main human rights issues of concern, best practices and recommendations thereon; and cover the period elapsed since the last review. Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to provide written submissions in line with the following:

- a) In light of relevant Human Rights Council resolutions, priority will be given to the submissions that are specifically tailored for the UPR and contain information on the follow-up to the preceding reviews, including an assessment of and comments on the implementation of recommendations and developments since the last review. Submissions should highlight main issues of concern and identify possible recommendations and best practices. Stakeholders are encouraged to include information on implementation, notably as linked to recommendations from the 3rd cycle.

5. Submissions should be focused and analytical, presenting conclusions based on a comprehensive analysis of the situation, with concise formulations of achievements, remaining concerns and recommendations. Submissions should prioritize recommendations from the previous cycles and reporting on how they have been implemented.

- a) Comments on the implementation of previous recommendations could include an assessment of the perceived level of implementation of recommendations (for example, “fully implemented”, “partially implemented”, “in the process of implementation” or “not implemented yet”), and refer to available information including national action plans, and assessments that may have been carried out by States or other entities. With regard to non-implemented or “partially implemented” recommendations, submissions may also highlight available information on existing challenges and identify areas for technical cooperation.
- b) Stakeholders should consider making concrete and implementable recommendations and reiterating previous ones where relevant. These should be S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Result-Oriented and Time-Bound, and linked to the themes addressed in the main submission.
- c) When referring to the implementation of recommendations from previous cycles, the clear identification of each recommendation (HRC report, cycle, paragraph number, recommendation number and recommending country) is encouraged.
- d) A matrix of thematically clustered recommendations is posted on the OHCHR-UPR country website. Relevant stakeholders may find it useful to add into the matrix information on the implementation of previous recommendations. The matrix may be submitted as an annex to the main contribution (its input would not be added to the word count). Please note that its content will not be quoted in the Summary of Stakeholder Submissions. The submission of the matrix should not replace the main contribution provided by the stakeholder.

6. Submissions **must not contain abusive language**, must comply with the word count limits and be presented within the established deadline and in the required format.

7. Practical suggestions

a) First-hand information should be given priority, as well as the stakeholder’s own views, findings and conclusions. Second-hand information should be referenced and referred to in endnotes, and included only if necessary. Submissions that entirely or for the most part repeat second-hand information will be excluded. Stakeholders should refrain from relying on and citing information from third-country state agencies.

b) While **referring to information attributed to United Nations bodies/agencies and/or mechanisms in their submission**, stakeholders should consider, to the extent possible, not listing all treaties ratification or copying concluding observations and recommendations of the human rights treaty bodies and/or the special procedures of the HRC or reports by UN bodies/agencies, as the latter are expected to be reflected in the UN compilation prepared by OHCHR.

c) Only submissions used for the summary will be uploaded. Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to include all important information in the main submission document. Stakeholders are encouraged to make submissions accessible for persons with disabilities.

d) With respect to **annexes**, stakeholders may submit annexes in order to provide additional information to better understand the situation or to support a substantive issue mentioned in the submission (for more information see...) Reports from other organizations, pictures, maps and annual reports should not be submitted as an annex. When available, stakeholders may also share progress reports (e.g. mid-term/periodic progress reports) by including them in an annex. Annexes to the written submissions may be uploaded to the OHCHR UPR submissions website, but information contained therein will not be reflected in the report.

B. Format

8. **Document format** - Use of word documents only - Written (main) submissions should be saved and submitted as a Word document only, annexes can have other formats as well, such as PDF.

9. **Identification** - Written submissions should be clearly identifiable. The cover page of the main submission should clearly identify the submitting stakeholder (letterhead, name and acronym, logo, webpage, email and postal address, etc.). **Joint submissions** should clearly identify the main submitting organization, followed by the other submitting organizations. For joint submissions, a list of organizations should appear in the cover page and in an annex to the document. The annex should also contain the full addresses and contact persons for each organization. Entities which are part of the State structure should submit their input as part of the National Report.

10. **Brief description of main activities of the organization/coalition (not to be included in the word count)** - A paragraph describing the main activities of the submitting organization/coalition, as well as date of establishment, especially for those

organizations which interact for the first time within the context of the UPR is also encouraged to be included in the cover page.

11. **Length** – Individual written submissions must not exceed 2815 words (additional documentation can be annexed for reference). Joint submissions must not exceed 5630 words. The cover page, endnotes and annexes will not be counted within the word/page limits of contributions. Annexes to the report should be submitted and uploaded separately from the report and be clearly identified as such.

12. **Use of endnotes** - Stakeholders should only use endnotes to reference information. Endnotes should not include any substantive information as it will not be taken into consideration in the summary.

13. **Numbering paragraphs and pages** - For ease of reference, paragraphs and pages should be always numbered.

14. **Language** - Written contributions should be submitted in one of the UN official languages only, preferably in English, French or Spanish.

C – Methodology

15. Stakeholders are encouraged to consult with one another at the national level for the preparation of the UPR submissions. Joint submissions by a large number of stakeholders are encouraged, when the stakeholders focus on issues of similar nature.

D – Confidentiality

16. The UPR mechanism does not provide for confidentiality and is conducted on the basis of public documents. Submissions which respect the abovementioned guidelines, as originally received will be publicly made available on OHCHR's - UPR country webpages, including the name of the submitting stakeholder.

17. Reference to **individual cases** should be made only if the safety and well-being of all concerned individuals will not be jeopardised by such a reference, with the consent of the victim and/or when applicable, of family members or if the case is already publicized. Submissions which identify or permit children and or victims of sexual violence to be identified will be excluded. Submissions by individuals, focusing on individual situations, and petition like submissions will not be admitted and should be addressed to the relevant UN human rights mechanisms dealing with individual

communications. Stakeholders can refer to individual situations only exceptionally, when relevant to the general situation of the country, or illustrating a common practice or if such individual case is emblematic.

18. Addressing acts of **intimidation and reprisal** against those who seek to cooperate, cooperate or have cooperated with the United Nations in the field of human rights is a priority for OHCHR. Any act of intimidation or reprisal should be promptly reported (ohchr-reprisals@un.org).

III. When to submit written contributions

19. **Deadlines for submissions** – Tentative and confirmed deadlines for stakeholders' submissions will be regularly posted on the OHCHR UPR website (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/NgosNhris.aspx>). All relevant stakeholders should check regularly the above-mentioned webpage, in case that updates (or extensions) are announced.

20. Stakeholders should note that written submissions to OHCHR should be sent indicatively at least six months before the relevant session of the Working Group on UPR, please consult the UPR webpage regarding the exact deadlines of upcoming sessions: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/NgosNhris.aspx>

21. Please note that submissions received after established deadlines will not be considered.

22. Written submissions should be final.

IV. Where and how to submit written contributions

23. Stakeholders' submissions should be sent only through the **“On-line UPR Submissions Registration System”** for written contributions for the UPR documentation available at the following link: <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org>

The technical guidance for the database is available on the following link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/ngosnhris.aspx>

24. All contributing organizations – national and international, individual organizations or coalition of organizations - will be requested to open an organizational profile in the system.

25. The approval of the organizational profile can take up to 24 hours and it is not automatic. Automatic messages are sent when a profile is created, approved and when contributions are submitted.

26. Contributing organizations may submit one individual contribution and submit one joint submission, and they may participate in multiple joint contributions per country (per session). When submitting joint contributions on behalf of coalitions, all organizations participating in the submission should be listed and the main submitting organization should be clearly identified.

27. All submissions used by the Secretariat will be listed in the Endnote 1 of the Summary report and posted on the UPR country webpages. Joint submissions will be referred to in the UPR documentation as 'Joint submissions' and identified with a number, as well as with the name of the Coalition and/or the list of organizations which form part of the coalition.

28. Contributing organizations can submit: (a) a cover letter/page; (b) one main submission (and translations in official UN languages) and (c) a maximum of 10 annexes.

29. Once contributions have been uploaded in the system, organizations will receive an automatic confirmation of their submission. Organizations can also consult their contributions history in the on-line system at any time. No additional confirmation by the OHCHR Secretariat will be sent.

30. The system does not allow organizations to add documents for a country after the automatic confirmation of their initial submission has been received. Additional documents (such as translations of main submissions, cover letters or annexes) should be sent by email to the UPR Submissions Helpdesk.

31. Should organizations encounter technical problems using the on-line system, please send email to **UPR Submissions**. (ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org)

V – Additional information, relevant documents and contact information

The 3rd UPR cycle has been focused on the implementation phase. Multiple practical tools have been developed during the 3rd cycle, such as: a) HC letter and annex, with advice provided to States based also on GA resolution 48/141; b) matrix of thematically clustered recommendations linked to a specific SDG, and c) UPR infographic with trends between the cycles and links to the SDGs and key areas for follow up action. A UPR Practical Guidance (from SG human rights initiative Call to Action) to maximize the use of UPR in the UN system, Tips for NGOs and NHRIs, and Tips for Members of Parliament have been issued. These tools stress the importance of implementation, building partnerships, and re-enforcing existing collaborative efforts to achieve concrete results at country level.

Regarding the important role of civil society in the UPR process, the Tips for NGOs offer pointers such as engaging in advocacy with the government to ensure a broad consultation process in the preparation of the national UPR report, maintaining an open dialogue and ensuring due consideration of the views of different stakeholders, as well as providing input to activities by UN country teams and encouraging linkages between the implementation of UPR and the SDGs. The *Study on UPR Emerging Good Practices* also reflected the significant increase in the involvement of civil society organizations since the inception of UPR, and the creation of national civil society coalitions on the UPR, bringing perceptible change to the collaborative nature of civil society activities on human rights at the national level and increase in timely advocacy with the diplomatic community, the media, government and independent institutions.

- **OHCHR UPR main webpage:**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx>.

- **OHCHR UPR webpage for NGOs and NHRIs:**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/NgosNhris.aspx>

- **Chapter VII of Working with the United Nations Human Rights**

Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society, available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/CivilSociety/Pages/Handbook.aspx>.

- **OHCHR Basic Facts about UPR:**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BasicFacts.aspx>

- **Official UPR country webpages:**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Documentation.aspx>

- **UPR Midterm reports available at OHCHR UPR webpage:**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRImplementation.aspx>

- **UNSDG Guidance Note on Human Rights for Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams:** <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unsdg-guidance-note-human-rights-resident-coordinators-and-un-country-teams>

- **UPR Practical Guidance:**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx>

- **UPR Tips for NHRIs and NGOs:**

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/Tips_21Sept2020.pdf

- **UPR Tips for Parliaments:**

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/TIPS_Members_Parliament.pdf

- **Study on Emerging Good Practices:**

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/UPR/Emerging_UPR_GoodPractices.pdf

HC Letter to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs – Matrix and Infographics:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/Documentation.aspx>

- **Strengthening Engagement with the International Human Rights Mechanisms—A web-based guide (UNDP):**

<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/strengthening-international-human-rights>

How to contact us:

1. **UPR Submissions Helpdesk:** ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org

2. **OHCHR National Institutions, Regional Mechanisms and Civil Society:**

- **National Institutions and regional Mechanisms:** ohchr-nationalinstitutions@un.org
- **Civil Society:** ohchr-civilsociety@un.org