

Special Procedures

The Council's Special Procedure mandate holders are individuals (special rapporteurs or independent experts) or working groups who address thematic issues or specific country situations in all parts of the world. They are prominent experts in the field of human rights serving in a personal capacity appointed by the Council who carry out country visits, research and study issues of concern. They also receive and consider complaints from human rights victims or witnesses, inquire with governments on their behalf, and issue public statements.

These independent experts regularly report to the Human Rights Council on their findings and recommendations and at times are the only mechanism alerting the international community to certain human rights issues. As of August 2016, there are 77 Special Procedure mandate holders for 56 mandates (42 thematic and 14 country-specific).

Commissions of Inquiries and Fact-Finding Missions

The Human Rights Council has also established a number of commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and investigations to respond to human rights violations, whether protracted or resulting from sudden events, and to promote accountability for such violations and counter impunity. These investigative bodies are supported by OHCHR staff who provide expertise and carry out missions as mandated. As of August 2016, 21 such commissions and missions have been authorized by the Council with four currently active (Syria, Eritrea, Burundi and South Sudan).

Presidents of the Human Rights Council

1st cycle Luis Alfonso de Alba Góngora (Mexico)
June 2006 - June 2007

2nd cycle Doru Costea (Romania)
June 2007 - June 2008

3rd cycle Martin I. Uthmaniyah (Nigeria)
June 2008 - June 2009

4th cycle Alex Van Meeuwen (Belgium)
June 2009 - June 2010

5th cycle Sihasak Phuangketkeow (Thailand)
June 2010 - June 2011

6th cycle Laura Dupuy Lasserre (Uruguay)
June 2011 - December 2012

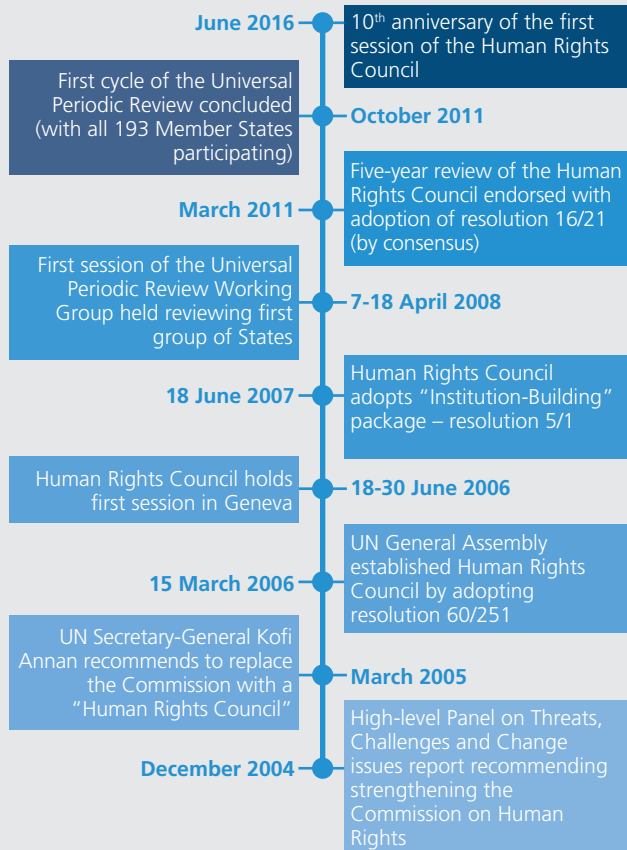
7th cycle Remigiusz Achilles Henczel (Poland), 2013

8th cycle Baudelaire Ndong Ella (Gabon), 2014

9th cycle Joachim Rucker (Germany), 2015

10th cycle Choi Kyonglim (Republic of Korea), 2015-2016

TIME LINE



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#HRCat10

All information valid as of 31 August 2016.



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
TENTH ANNIVERSARY • 2006-2016



What is the Human Rights Council?

Since its creation in 2006, the Human Rights Council (HRC) has been the principle intergovernmental body within the United Nations (UN) system composed of 47 countries responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe.

The Council provides a multilateral forum to address human rights violations, themes and country situations, responds to human rights emergencies, and makes recommendations on how to better implement human rights on the ground.

“Ten years on, I commend the Council on making important progress towards putting the human rights pillar back at the centre of the United Nations system.”

Ban Ki-moon, 8th Secretary-General of the United Nations

How the Council works

The Council meets for at least 10 weeks per year at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland, in regular sessions taking place in March, June and September. The Council can also convene urgent meetings on short notice to respond to emerging human rights crises. The Council's subsidiary bodies meet for approximately 20 additional weeks each year. Since its first session in 2006, the Council's meeting time has increased by 50 per cent.

“Over the past decade, the Human Rights Council has not only established itself as a unique forum to hear a wide range of voices from human rights victims and witnesses, but also as a body well poised to respond to emergencies.”

Ambassador Choi Kyonglim, 10th President of the Human Rights Council (2016)

The Council has a bureau which consists of a president and four vice presidents who represent each of the five regional groups. The 47 members of the Council are elected by the UN General Assembly based on the following breakdown: African States - 13 seats; Asia-Pacific States - 13 seats; Eastern European States - 6 seats, Latin American and Caribbean States - 8 seats; Western European and other States - 7 seats.

Members of the Council are elected for three-year terms with one-third of the members being renewed each year.

The Council can adopt texts with or without a recorded vote. For the Council to adopt a text by vote, it must enjoy the support of a simple majority. Only Council members are able to vote. The decisions of the Council are not legally binding.

In addition to Member States of the Council, Observers, which include non-Member States, inter-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), also participate actively

in Council sessions. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides technical, substantive and secretariat support to the Council.

“It is important that we have institutions like the Human Rights Council which can monitor the state of human rights in the world, and ensure all are protected.”

Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate – at 1st session of the Human Rights Council, June 2006

Universal Periodic Review

The Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States once every four years.

During UPR Working Group meetings held three times per year, UN Member States pose recommendations to the States under review aimed at improving human rights practices and policies in those countries. Reviewed States are then expected to implement the recommendations they accept, which on average are 75% of all the recommendations made.

The ultimate aim of this process is to improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations wherever they occur. All 193 UN Member States have been reviewed at least once by the UPR. By November 2016, the UPR is expected to conclude its second cycle.

“The UPR is one of the Human Rights Council's most innovative and striking achievements, with real potential for transformative action. It has set an important precedent by maintaining complete universality over its first two cycles.”

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (September 2014 - present)

Advisory Committee

The Council's Advisory Committee functions as the “think tank” of the Human Rights Council focusing mainly on studies and research-based advice. It consists of 18 independent experts drawn proportionally from the five UN regional groups, who all serve in their personal capacity for three-year terms and are eligible for re-election only once. The Advisory Committee has produced studies on a wide range of issues including post-disaster and post-conflict situations, terrorist hostage taking, the right to food, missing persons, the rights of persons with albinism and promoting human rights through sport and the Olympic idea, among others.

Complaint Procedure

The Complaint Procedure of the Human Rights Council is a victims'-oriented process addressing consistent patterns of gross and reliably attested human rights violations occurring in any part of the world and under any circumstances. The Complaint Procedure is based on communications received from individuals, groups or organizations that claim to be victims of human rights violations or that have direct, reliable knowledge of such violations.

Two distinct working groups — the Working Group on Communications and the Working Group on Situations — are responsible, respectively, for examining communications and bringing consistent patterns of gross and reliably attested violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms to the Council's attention, for their further action.

“The Special Procedures are the crown jewel of the system. They, together with the High Commissioner and her staff, provide the independent expertise and judgement, which is essential to effective human rights protection.”


Kofi Annan, 7th Secretary-General of the United Nations, December 2006

SOME FACTS & FIGURES:

 **100** Countries who have served as a Council member

940 Texts have been adopted by the HRC (699 thematic, 238 country specific; in addition, 361 UPR decisions have been adopted by the HRC)



 **21** Commissions of Inquiries and Fact Finding Missions set up by the HRC

29 Countries noted in country-specific resolutions



24 HRC special sessions held



8,000 UPR recommendations made per year on average



75% UPR recommendations States have committed to implement



2006 → 400
2014 → 760

NGO participation

2006 → 87
2015 → 480

NGO side events

3,400 Average number of communications submitted to Complaint Procedure per year

