**Human Rights Council 37th session**

**Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming**

*Theme: The promotion and protection of human rights in the light of the universal periodic review mechanism: challenges and opportunities*

26 February 2018 (Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva)

Summary prepared by the UPR Branch, OHCHR

*Summary*

In its resolution 16/21, the Human Rights Council decided to hold an annual high-level panel discussion to interact with heads of governing bodies and secretariats of United Nations agencies and funds within their respective mandates on specific human rights themes, with the objective of promoting the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system. Following consultations, the Council decided that the theme of the 2018 panel discussion would be “The promotion and protection of human rights in the light of the universal periodic review mechanism: challenges and opportunities”. The following is an informal summary prepared by the Universal Periodic Review Branch of OHCHR.

All speakers underlined the fact that the UPR was a critical tool of the Human Rights Council and UN Member States. With the UPR in its third cycle, the emphasis should now lie on implementation. Discussions identified the need for UPR reviews to remain universal, independent, impartial, and non-politicised, with recommendations that are constructive, specific, action-oriented and implementable, taking into account national capacities. It was flagged that substantive issues raised in UPR reviews often mirror the recommendations of other human rights mechanisms, forming a cross-section of critical human rights gaps at the country level which, if addressed, will build more resilient societies and sustain development and peace. The strengthening of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance was important in order to effectively support national implementation efforts. The submission of mid-term progress reports on the implementation of UPR recommendations was also encouraged.

The Panel identified the need for strong coordination of implementation efforts at the national level, with a widespread support for national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up. The role of national human rights institutions and NGOs at the national and international levels was emphasized, as well as the importance of non-retaliation for any form of cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms. Discussions also focused on the complementarity between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UPR. There was a great potential for better and more focused use of human rights recommendations in system-wide action across the UN in support of the SG’s new emphasis on prevention, as well as the 2030 Agenda.

The panel identified the UPR as a unique opportunity for countries to ground national development programmes and policies in human rights and to move forward the 2030 Agenda. The UN system at the national level is well placed to support these efforts, including through a short list of clear priorities in the UNDAF, a stronger United Nations Resident Coordinator providing leadership and imposing discipline on a UNCT, less fragmented and more pooled funding from donors, and a stronger accountability of the UN towards Member States. The Panel also highlighted that the UPR allows for a discussion on cross-border impacts and regional issues in the context of the SDGs, as well as highlighting areas for North-South and South-South cooperation.

Panel discussions also highlighted that the international donor community could better leverage the UPR. The OECD/DAC members could increasingly use the UPR as an important tool in coordinating bilateral development assistance - especially in priority countries - by leveraging UPR accepted recommendations.

**Introduction**

On 26 February 2018, the Human Rights Council held, pursuant to its resolution 16/21, the annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming, focusing on “the promotion and protection of human rights in the light of the universal periodic review mechanism: challenges and opportunities”. The panel discussion provided an opportunity for States, international organizations and other stakeholders to explore how supporting at all levels the implementation of recommendations resulting from the UPR strengthens the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level, to achieve UPR objectives, as an important mechanism in contributing to the enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights.

The Panel discussion was chaired by H.E. Mr. Vojislav Šuc, President of the Human Rights Council, and moderated by Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. Opening statements were delivered by H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly, Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (through pre-recorded video message), and Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The panellists were:

* Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (pre-recorded video message), and Mr. Robert Piper, Special Adviser on United Nations Reforms, United Nations Development Programme participating on his behalf;
* Ms. Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Chair of the Development Assistance Committee, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (pre-recorded message), and Ms. Anna Sundström, Executive Advisor to the DAC Chair participating on her behalf;
* H.E Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador; and
* Ms. Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**Opening statements**

**H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák**, President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly, stated that the UPR was a critical tool in the work of the Human Rights Council and in ensuring that people’s rights were protected. The UPR process seeks to build a constructive conversation around human rights in and among Member States. When assessing the success of the UPR, the most important is its impact on people’s lives. The UPR recommendations have to be implemented on the ground and follow-up has to be ensured at the national and international level. He flagged that resources to implement the recommendations are critical and encouraged Member States to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance. UPR recommendations should be action-oriented and sufficiently specific for proper implementation. He emphasized that the UPR has made the international human rights architecture better and that it has strengthened institutions, laws and policies at the national level.

**Ms. Amina Mohammed**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, through a video message, mentioned that the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is as relevant now as it was in 1948, as we continue to witness a world rife with conflict, inequalities, discrimination, stigma, crime and injustice. In this context, the UPR is a unique platform of engagement. Using a global townhall approach, all 193 member states undertake commitments amongst their peers to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations. As such it is one of the most important accountability mechanisms. She also highlighted the importance of contributions from grass roots consultations in national and sub-national development planning and that listening to the independent voices of women is increasingly important in light of emerging cross-border and global challenges in line with international human rights obligations. The DSG also mentioned the need for Member States to more meaningfully apply the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, including through better engagement with the private sector. Finally, she emphasized that the UPR process should be utilised to actively support the Secretary General’s reform agendas, particularly by contributing to the analysis and strategy of a preventive approach, and grounding the operational work of the UN firmly cross its three pillars, peace, development and human rights.

**Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, mentioned that the substantive issues raised in UPR reviews often mirror the recommendations of the Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies, forming a cross-section of critical human rights gaps at the country level which, if addressed, will build more resilient societies and sustain development and peace. He flagged the potential for better and more focused use of human rights recommendations in system-wide action across the UN in support of the SG’s new emphasis on prevention, as well as the 2030 Agenda. He encouraged all Resident Coordinators and UNCTs to ensure the use of clustered recommendations in UNDAFs and programme documents signed at the country level, and to assist States to achieve concrete progress both in terms of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. The HC mentioned that he sends follow-up letters to each State, highlighting actions that will particularly support the implementation of UPR recommendations and the voluntary commitments made by States in the course of their review. He flagged that these letters are public, on the Office website, and that, while they address actions which Government authorities and Parliaments can take, they may also be of special interest to UN partners. The HC urged donors, as well as the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, to support implementation of human rights recommendations, and to consider using the analysis and benchmarks which they provide in the context of periodic reviews of development cooperation. He encouraged States to reach out to the UN system, through Resident Coordinators and OHCHR, with requests for assistance in implementing recommendations.

The **Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**, Ms. Kate Gilmore, in her role as moderator of the Panel discussions stated that the unique impact, utility and reach of the UPR is without precedent. More than 10 years on and in its 3rd cycle it is the case that each Member State has been subjected to its scrutiny and each State had the opportunity to contribute in turn. The impact through the gift of its recommendations, is to be felt across sectors, internationally, regionally and locally.

**Statements of panellists**

**Mr. Achim Steiner**, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, through a video message, emphasized the complementarity between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UPR and mentioned that all Member States have committed to both, presenting a unique opportunity for the international development community to support the full realization of human rights in the countries it serves. UNDP encourages countries to ground national development programmes and policies in human rights, and supports the implementation of UPR and treaty body recommendations to strengthen national human rights systems and processes. He flagged that the UPR provides an opportunity and entry points for UNDP’s programming at the country level, and the review’s recommendations can create political space for discussions with national partners on key development issues, prompting cooperation from all stakeholders, including civil society and the donor community.

**Ms. Charlotte Petri Gornitzka**, Chair of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, through an audio message, mentioned that the Committee aligns development co-operation with human rights efforts at the national level through the funding of human rights projects. Development cooperation and many of these projects are directly linked to the implementation of UPR recommendations. She mentioned that this link could be stronger and that it is the responsibility of both the State under Review as well as the donor country to do so. The human rights based approach is supported through the policy networks at the OECD DAC, through which development practitioners exchange experiences. She flagged that for DAC members the UPR is an important tool in coordinating their bilateral development co-operation in a specific country context. She mentioned that when there is a political will to address human rights issues, donors should be ready to tailor their support to the UPR recommendations. The OECD DAC is looking forward to continue working together with OHCHR.

**H.E Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, underlined the importance of standards, institutions and mechanisms in strengthening respect for human rights.  With the support of OHCHR, Ecuador had developed an effective mechanisms for inter-institutional coordination in the compilation, processing and submitting of reports to United Nations human rights mechanisms and the implementation of recommendations (SIDERECHOS). She mentioned that the platform also allows for effective social participation and enhances transparency and accountability. The system is also useful for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.  She stated that international cooperation is necessary to support the strengthening of national human rights systems, including financing and transfer of technologies to developing countries. She concluded by emphasizing that monitoring mechanisms should be brought down to the grass roots level, which will help build participatory democracies.

**Ms. Mary Robinson**, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, mentioned that new and complex challenges facing the world are addressed through Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework as well as the development of two Global Compacts on refugees and migrants. The UPR and its process of reporting, accountability and implementation could contribute to the integration of human rights into these processes. She flagged the capacity of the UPR to create conversations between stakeholders. She welcomed the SG’s focus on the importance of national mechanisms for reporting and follow up and said that, where appropriately structured, these bodies allow the UPR to bring together agencies, decision makers and stakeholders at all levels of society. She flagged that appropriate integration of Agenda 2030, the UNFCCC and other international principles and objectives can better inform all parties to the rights impacts of international policy making. She emphasized that equally such mechanisms must also reach the furthest behind first, and that by engaging at the community and grassroots level valuable insights into the human rights impact of development can be gained. She concluded by emphasizing that SDGs such as those on climate change and the oceans engage trans-boundary impacts on human rights and that the UPR allows for a discussion between States on these impacts and highlights areas for North-South and South-South cooperation.

**Interventions from the floor**

The following States took the floor: Brazil, on behalf of Portuguese Speaking Countries; Angola; South Africa; Lesotho; Estonia, on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Group; the European Union; Indonesia, on behalf of a group of countries; Togo, on behalf of the African Group; Portugal, on behalf of a group of countries; Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; Israel; the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; China; Iraq; Sierra Leone; Tunisia; the United States of America; Greece; France; Nepal; Botswana; Morocco; and Honduras.

The following national human rights institutions and civil society organisations took the floor: the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions; the National Human Rights Commission of Mauritania; the Centre Catholique International de Genève; the International Lesbian and Gay Association; the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik; and the Friends World Committee for Consultation.

**Brazil, speaking on behalf of Portuguese Speaking Countries**, welcomed the focus of the Panel discussion. It mentioned that it was important to focus the work of the Council on the implementation of recommendations at the national level, as well as the important role that technical assistance could play in this regard. It noted the increasing role played by national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up, involving various stakeholders. It emphasized the importance of promoting synergies between the implementation of UPR recommendations and national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

**Angola** mentioned that the UPR allowed a transparent assessment of the human rights situation in all UN Member States and allows for the sharing of good practices. It flagged the growing number of general recommendations as one of the UPR’s challenges and mentioned that the review should become more effective, practical and non-politicized. It called upon the international community to play a role regarding technical assistance for the implementation of UPR recommendations.

**South Africa** said that the UPR is an effective instrument for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It stated that as, a critical mechanism, it should not be tempered with. Support for national efforts is critical, including in the lead up to the review. It called for a strengthening of the Voluntary Fund for Implementation, in particular to assist developing countries. It highlighted that UPR recommendations should be constructive and forward looking.

**Lesotho** welcomed the positive change that the UPR promotes and the all-inclusive stakeholder process. It stated that the challenge remains implementation.

**Estonia**, on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic Group, stated that the UPR has provided States with an enormous opportunity and that the most important challenge is turning recommendations into action. It emphasized the importance of civil society at the national and international level, without facing retaliation by the State. It stated that the UPR process could be empowered with technical assistance by OHCHR.

**The European Union** stated that it remains strongly committed to the UPR and that equal treatment is central to its success. Effective implementation of recommendations is crucial, and recommendations should be action oriented, specific and measurable. It welcomes the submission by many voluntary UPR mid-term reports and tools such as implementation time-lines. It mentioned that UPR recommendations form an integral part of EU human rights discourse with third countries, and it reiterated its strong commitment to the UPR process.

**Indonesia, on behalf of Mexico, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia**, noted that the UPR should remain universal, independent and impartial, whereas its recommendations should be constructive, forward-looking and implementable, and should take into account national capacities. It stated that the involvement of civil society and national human rights institutions is essential. It reiterated its continued support for the strengthening of national mechanisms for reporting and follow up.

**Togo, on behalf of the African Group**, reaffirmed its commitment to the UPR. It supports international cooperation and the exchange of human rights good practices as advocated by the UPR. The African Group supports the idea to unlock the potential available in the United Nations system and the international community, particularly through south-south and north-south cooperation.

**Portugal, on behalf of the group of friends** on national implementation, reporting and follow up, stated that effective domestic implementation of human rights obligations and recommendations is key to advancing the promotion and protection of human rights. The success of the UPR will be measured by the effective implementation of accepted recommendations on the ground. It emphasized the need to strengthen the relevance, precision and impact of recommendations during the third cycle and encouraged mid-term progress reports on the implementation of recommendations. It stated that the Group of Friends is particularly interested in the role that dedicated national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up can play in coordinating domestic implementation, tracking progress, measuring impact and reporting, as well as in identifying gaps and needs and mobilizing support. It posed the question as to which checks and balances could be established within and around those mechanisms to ensure a State driven implementation with the necessary proper monitoring of effective implementation.

**Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement**, mentioned that the 17th NAM Summit reiterated the need to preserve the UPR as the only international mechanism to examine the human rights situation in all Member States on an equal footing. It stated that it is essential to ensure that the UPR is carried out by the Human Rights Council as a results oriented, cooperative mechanism based on an interactive dialogue with the full participation of the State under Review and taking into account its capacity building needs, and the need to eradicate selectivity, double standards and politicisation.

**Israel** stated that the UPR enables a State to take stock of its domestic human rights situation through a unique peer review process. However, it emphasized that the Universal Periodic Review alone could not substitute a robust national commitment to pursue human rights objectives in a continuous manner. A State should do much more than just check the box every four to five years. It underlined the importance of the quality of recommendations, and stated that recommending countries should refrain from making political statements.

The **United Kingdom** stated that the UPR can potentially bring together many of the bodies needed to promote and protect human rights and promote sustainable peace and development. It stated that the UPR has particular value for the UN system, providing a unique and excellent entry point to work in partnership with States. It posed the question how to ensure that UPR recommendations, alongside relevant recommendations of treaty bodies and special procedures, are used by the full range of UN agencies when developing their country specific plans.

**China**noted with regret the increasing trend towards politicization, running counter to the initial objectives of the UPR and the HRC. It emphasized the importance of persisting to promote objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-confrontation and non-politicisation, as well as respecting the sovereignty and reality of the country concerned. It highlighted the need to deal with different categories of human rights equally.

**Iraq** mentioned that the UPR is a mechanism to complement, rather than replicate, the treaty bodies. It highlighted the important role of NGOs, including in strengthening the UPR.

**Sierra Leone** mentioned that the third UPR cycle should shift the emphasis on implementation. It stated that as States worked towards implementation of their accepted recommendations, there should be a close link between the mechanisms of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Universal Periodic Review implementation at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels.

**Tunisia** stressed the importance of the UPR in institutional structures in the global human rights architecture. It posed the question how we can guarantee the effectiveness and durability of the UPR. It stated that the UPR mechanism is also a form of cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the State under Review and all of the different stakeholders from civil society. This participation should be kept for the benefit of implementation.

The **United States of America** expressed its commitment to the UPR process. The UPR is a critical element in identifying and hopefully mitigating the infringement of human rights and fundamental freedoms across the world. It is encouraged by Governments’ willingness to engage civil society in the UPR process. It stated that it is important to discuss best practices for how the Human Rights Council can work together with States to sustainably implement recommendations. The Council could share its expertise, provide guidance and become a key implementing partner.

**Greece** stated that the Universal Periodic Review motivated States to establish an open channel of communication with civil society, allowing for better synergies and leading to mutually beneficial exchanges between the actors involved.

**France** mentioned that the UPR mechanism has proven to be a success. The follow-up and implementation of recommendations could be strengthened, and in this spirit, France encouraged the generalisation of mid-term reports.

**Nepal** stated that the UPR is unique and a defining feature of the Human Rights Council. It has evolved to become a hallmark of the international protection of human rights.  In order to improve the mechanism, it recommended ensuring objectivity, non-selectivity and transparency in dealing with issues, as well as promoting universality, interdependence and the mutually reinforcing nature of all human rights.

**Botswana** highlighted its national experience in fully involving civil society in the preparation of its national reports, coordinated by the national mechanism for reporting and follow up under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The challenge is the high number of recommendations, in particular those requiring legislative and constitutional amendments.

**Morocco** said the success of the Universal Periodic Review was not only due to the participation of all States in the first and second rounds, but due to the quality of achievements of States in implementing the recommendations to promote human rights.

**Honduras** mentioned that the UPR is an inclusive and constructive domestic tool, and that technical assistance played a critical role. It mentioned that it was crucial to ensure that no one is left behind, as conflict is triggered by inequality.

The **Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions** noted that one of the main challenges of the UPR was the implementation and follow-up phase. States now had the opportunity to overcome this and several national human rights institutions were already working on methodologies matching the recommendations of the UPR and the Sustainable Development Goals. The **Centre Catholique International de Genève**, in a joint statement, stressed the need for a more systematic evaluation of the implementation status of recommendations. It welcomed the HC letters following the UPR outcome report adoption. The establishment of national mechanisms for reporting and follow up would greatly advance the implementation of recommendations but also the work of other human rights bodies such as the Special Procedures and treaty bodies. The **International Lesbian and Gay Association**, welcomed the fact that throughout the 29 UPR working group sessions, 1,475 recommendations had addressed sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics in 158 countries.  Moreover, 100 countries had accepted recommendations on these issues, showing that the human rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities were a global concern. The **National Human Rights Commission of Mauritania** stressed that its approach in improving the protection of human rights relied on the involvement of civil society organizations and local communities, but also through working jointly with Parliament in the adoption of important laws. The **Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik** stated that full coordination of executive, judiciary and legislative entities along with international cooperation and assistance were necessary for the successful implementation of recommendations. The **Friends World Committee for Consultation** stated that mainstreaming human rights was integral to better coordination between the three pillars of the UN. It mentioned that the UPR is a useful vehicle to better link sustaining peace and the prevention work of the Human Rights Council. This could be done through inclusion of conflict analyses in UPR documentation, use of such information in early warning, and issuing recommendations that link technical assistance for the prevention of human rights violations.

**Concluding remarks by panellists**

**Mr. Robert Piper**, Special Adviser on United Nations Reforms, United Nations Development Programme, said there was a long list of examples where the UPR recommendations had made their way into UNDP programming, at the insistence of Member States to translate the recommendations into action. There will be more of such examples with the implementation of the SDGs and the implementation of this Human Rights-based Approach. He mentioned that during the Panel a lot of expectations on UNCTs were voiced, and reminded that at the Economic and Social Council in New York a raft of reforms about the strengthening of the United Nations development system, especially at the field level, were currently being discussed. He stated that the Panel debate and Member States expectations at the Human Rights Council needed to be mirrored in New York, to the UN Secretary General and the expectation on the UN development system support to human rights and the UPR in countries. There should be a list of clear priorities in the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), a stronger RC providing leadership and imposing discipline on a UNCT, less fragmented and more pooled funding from donors, and a stronger accountability of the UN towards Member States. He mentioned that in order to have a more effective UN country team response, it is necessary to ensure that the Secretary-General’s ambitions are backed by political support, resources and by the UN system. He stated that there are tremendous resources at the regional level, and making those connect better to UN country efforts is crucial.

**H.E Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, stressed the importance of the quality and relevance of recommendations stemming from the UPR. She stated that parliaments need to play a crucial role in setting standards. She also stressed the role of national human rights institutions, and the interconnections between treaty bodies, Special Procedures and the UPR within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Cooperation and financing through the UPR Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance were needed to support States in the implementation of UPR recommendations

**Ms. Mary Robinson**, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, welcomed the strong support for the UPR. She mentioned however that she had felt a certain degree of comfort by Member States during the Panel discussion, and that this worried her somewhat as dialogue about human rights had to be rather tough. She mentioned that a dialogue had to involve civil society and address real issues, without politicization. She mentioned she was glad for the strong support during the Panel discussion for national mechanisms for reporting and follow up and for implementation, and encouraged the submission of voluntary mid-term reports. She noted with satisfaction the linking to the 2030 Agenda, and proposed to also link the Paris Climate Agenda and the role in peacebuilding. Regarding North-South and South-South cooperation, she noted that there had been interesting references to important regional issues and that more reflection and a deeper analysis is necessary. She also noted that a number of countries had flagged the need for technical support and expressed the hope that the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance would be better resourced.

The moderator, **Ms.** **Kate Gilmore**, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, thanked the panellists and stated that there was a clear call in the Panel discussions for a ubiquitous UPR review, and one that is urgent and profoundly universal, periodic and robust.

The President of the Human Rights Council, **H.E. Mr. Vojislav Šuc,** thanked the President of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, speakers and panellist and other participants for their valuable inputs.

**Conclusions**

As mentioned by the United Nations Secretary-General in his remarks at the opening of the 37th session of the Human Rights Council, the UPR is an essential tool for conflict prevention, subjecting every State to the scrutiny needed for accountability, recognizing that they can make improvements, and recognizing that the UN system has responsibilities to support States in this regard. He emphasized that it is imperative for the Human Rights Council and the UN as a whole to focus much more on implementation and national follow-up, and called for streamlined ways to bring the outputs of the international human rights mechanisms systematically into overall UN action and all its efforts to supports the achievement of the SDGs.

In the light of these remarks, the discussions at the annual high-level panel have given a clear indication of how Governments, the UN system and the wider international community, including donors, can increase the focus on implementation through the UPR process.

First, the UPR process is an inclusive process and action-oriented mechanism involving all States on an equal footing to promote and protect human rights. It allows States to share their best practices and to cooperate with each other to advance human rights while ensuring non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity.

Second, UPR recommendations are an important entry point for cooperation with and action by Governments, as they address critical gaps in implementation vis-à-vis the legal obligations entered into by Member States when they ratify treaties and the political commitments they make through previous cycles of the UPR.

Third, a strong focus in such cooperation on strengthening national level coordination will facilitate the effective implementation and follow up to UPR recommendations, as well as those of other international human rights mechanisms. The Panel discussions, as well as national level experience, have shown the critical role played by national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up (NMRFs). These permanent national governmental mechanisms or structures are mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international human rights mechanisms, including the UPR and coordinate and track national follow-up and implementation. The NMRF performs these functions in coordination with ministries, specialized State bodies such as the national statistics office, parliament and the judiciary, and in consultation with the national human rights institution(s) and civil society. The benchmark of success is the achievement of concrete results at country level and changes in law and practices that enhance human rights protection, also through national action or implementation plans.

Moreover, through the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinators, UPR recommendations could be more systematically reflected in United Nations Development Assistance Framework documents and programme documents signed at the country level. This will assist States to achieve concrete progress both in terms of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, the international donor community could better leverage the UPR as an important tool in coordinating bilateral development co-operation in a specific country context. UPR recommendations allow for a better alignment of development and human rights efforts in countries that receive official development assistance, especially when the countries are ready to follow up to accepted UPR recommendations, ahead of their next review, four and a half years later. This would no doubt contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of aid and national ownership.

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Annexes:

Statements by:

* H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly
* Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
* Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
* Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme
* Ms. Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Chair of the Development Assistance Committee, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
* H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador; and
* Ms. Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**U N I T E D N A T I O N S  N A T I O N S U N I E S**

**PRESIDENT OF THE 72ND SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK**

**ANNUAL HIGH-LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS MAINSTREAMING**

**Geneva, 26 February 2018**

Thank you very much Mr. President of the Human Rights Council, Mr. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Excellencies, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen –

Good afternoon

We are all born with human rights. But this offers little comfort to the people whose rights and dignity are trampled on with impunity. So, it is our duty to make sure that people’s rights are promoted and protected. That is why the work of the Human Rights Council is essential. And the

Universal Periodic Review has been a critical tool in doing so. At the same time, we must reflect on the challenges and opportunities presented by the Universal Periodic Review - to ensure that this tool remains relevant. So, I will start with the good news. The Universal Periodic Review has enjoyed success. All Member States have participated in it. It is universal. And it is based on equal treatment of all countries.

It is a Member State driven process that still allows for contributions from the UN system and other stakeholders. Its inclusivity must be commended. The Universal Periodic Review is a unique dialogue- a space where Member States, the UN system and other stakeholders have the opportunity to listen to one another. Where difficult questions are asked and information is clarified. From all accounts, this has been done in a transparent and respectful manner. Indeed, it is not about shaming. Instead, it is about highlighting opportunities to improve the human rights situation in a given country. It is about creating space for discussion, to pose questions and to get answers. It is about concrete steps, which should improve the lives of people, on the ground.

The UPR process seeks to build a constructive conversation around human rights in and among Member States. And difficult topics do come up. From the death penalty to reproductive rights and LGBT issues. From the rights of indigenous people to criminal justice and accountability for torture. These discussions can be contentious but they are absolutely necessary. And people must remain at their core.

For all the good that the Universal Periodic Review does, there are still opportunities to make it better. No tool is perfect. Each one must be continually shaped, to keep it fit for its purpose.

When assessing the success of the Universal Periodic Review, what is most important is its impact on people’s lives.  We need to strive to put in place UPR recommendations on the ground;

Also, there must be appropriate follow-up at the national and international level.

Resources to implement the recommendations are critical. I encourage Member States to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance. And the nature of the recommendations is important, too. They must be action-oriented and sufficiently specific for proper implementation.

In conclusion, the Universal Periodic Review has now entered its third cycle. It has been over ten years since the General Assembly adopted the resolution to begin this important process of review. And, I believe that our multilateral system is stronger with this mechanism as part of it.

We have, collectively, made progress in some areas. Challenges do remain. But we must press on.

Human rights are central to our humanity. They are not just a matter for conference rooms in Geneva, or in New York. First and foremost, they are a matter for people who may never enter these rooms. But, these people’s voices are heard in the Universal Periodic Review – through national reports, information compiled by the United Nations, and information submitted by other stakeholders. And, importantly, Governments have the chance to respond.

After this, many recommendations are implemented on the ground - which can preserve human dignity and save lives. Congratulations to the Human Rights Council and to all who have made the Universal Periodic Review a success. It has made the international human rights architecture better. It has strengthened institutions, laws and policies at home. And it stands as a beacon of hope for people.

Thank you.

**U N I T E D N A T I O N S**  **N A T I O N S U N I E S**

**THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE Annual High-level Panel Discussion on Human Rights Mainstreaming**

**“Promotion and protection of human rights in light of the UPR mechanism; challenges and opportunities”**

**Geneva, 26 February**

Excellencies,

Distinguished representatives,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you for this important meeting and at this important time — as we mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Declaration is the most translated document in the world.

But as the Secretary-General has said, our constant challenge is to translate it into action.

The Universal Periodic Review is essential in helping us do just that.

The UPR is a unique platform of engagement. It is one of our most important accountability mechanisms. It applies to all member states. And it helps show how we are progressing in advancing equally on all rights - civil, cultural, economic, political and social.

As you begin your discussions, allow me to put four questions on the table.

**First,** we function within a multilateral system; but the measure of our accountabilities is national.

Increasingly, within our globally interconnected world, and the movement of people across borders, more of our challenges are also cross-border in nature.

The supremacy and applicability of international human rights law, customary international law and international human rights instruments, places new demands on traditional political obligations.

Are our international mechanisms sufficient to address new emerging cross-border and global obligations?

**Second,** the UPR process envisions active engagement and grass roots consultations. This proximity to and empowerment of people, of independent perspectives and women’s views are invaluable.

How can we make the most of these contributions for further improvement and gain their acceptance as credible and legitimate inputs into national and sub-national development planning?

**Third**, the private sector and businesses have direct impact on the socio-economic fabric and our environment. More than six years ago, the Human Rights Council endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework.
We must consider how we can better and more meaningfully apply these principles-globally, regionally and nationally, both to member states and the private sector.

**Fourth,** the Secretary-General is advancing a prevention agenda to end conflict and forge peace and security.

This agenda recognizes the importance of sustainable, inclusive and resilient pathways.

Our roadmap is the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

An Agenda that commits to leave no one behind,reaffirms the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and emphasizes the Charter responsibilities of all States to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

The Secretary-General has laid out an ambitious reform agenda to reposition the UN development system to better support the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development; make ‘prevention’ an axis of UN system analysis and strategy; and improve operational coordination across our work of peace, development and human rights.

We must ensure that the UPR process actively contributes to delivering on a global prevention agenda and notably on moving forward the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.

**In closing**, I wish all of you a productive and engaging discussion.

Thank you for your commitment. Let us keep working together to promote and protect equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.

Thank you.

**Human Rights Council 37th Session**

**Annual High-level Panel Discussion**

**on Human Rights Mainstreaming**

**“Promotion and protection of human rights in light of the UPR mechanism; challenges and opportunities”**

**Statement by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**

**United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Geneva, 26 February 2018**

Excellencies,

Distinguished panellists,

Colleagues and Friends,

 Almost ten years ago, on 7 April 2008, the first Universal Periodic Review began with a review of Bahrain, and a new era began. Never before had a global institution publicly assessed the human rights record of every State, identifying shortfalls and proposing remedial actions and reforms. The UPR embodies the world's recognition that human rights are not only a domestic issue; they are also a matter for international concern.

The substantive issues raised in UPR reviews often mirror the recommendations of the Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies. They form a cross-section of critical human rights gaps at the country level which, if addressed, will build more resilient societies and sustain development and peace. There is a great deal of potential for better and more focused use of human rights recommendations in system-wide action across the UN; such action will be strongly supportive of the Secretary General’s new emphasis on prevention, as well as the 2030 Agenda.

In recent years all the UN human rights bodies have made strides towards integrating our work with UN partners. Several UN County Teams have also begun sending information to the mechanisms, including the UPR. I encourage your thoughts on how best we can continue to integrate human rights recommendations into the operations of country teams, particularly given the Secretary General's announcement last month of measures to strengthen the coordination of UNCTs, with better resources to support their work.

 A number of recent developments may be of interest in your discussions. In recent years my Office has devised a clustered database of recommendations by the human rights mechanisms, for use by all national authorities and UN teams. We encourage all Resident Coordinators and UNCTs to ensure these clustered recommendations in UNDAFs and programme documents signed at the country level, to assist States to achieve concrete progress both in terms of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. I welcome your comments on how we can contribute to better use this guidance.

Furthermore, in the course of the third cycle of the UPR, I will be addressing follow-up letters to each State, to highlight actions that will particularly support the implementation of UPR recommendations and the voluntary commitments made by States in the course of their review. These letters are public, on the Office website – and while they address actions which Government authorities and Parliaments can take, they may also be of special interest to our UN partners.

In following up human rights recommendations, members of UNCTs will have the opportunity to develop stronger relationships with national institutions and civil society movements focused on human rights. Their contributions and expertise can powerfully improve the pertinence and impact of the work of the UN on the ground.

 I also urge donors, as well as the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, to support implementation of human rights recommendations, and to consider using the analysis and benchmarks which they provide in the context of periodic reviews of development cooperation. And I encourage States to reach out to the UN system, through Resident Coordinators and my own staff, with requests for assistance in implementing recommendations.

 In closing, allow me to speak to the fundamental importance of human rights mainstreaming. I believe this to be crucial to our organisation, and to our broader future – as history has demonstrated, time and again, and is demonstrating still today. The core to success in our work to uphold peace and development is support for human rights.

 The UN's work is often described as having three distinct pillars, but a more apt image would be closer to a triple helix. Human rights, sustainable development and peace build on each other. They have multiple points of connection, and together they create a structure which is resilient and strong.

 But the fact remains that no one strand in that helix can adequately function alone.

 I thank you Mr. President.

**Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme,**

**Mr. Achim Steiner**

**Human Rights Council Annual Meeting**

**Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming.**

**Theme: The promotion and protection of human rights in the light of the universal periodic review mechanism: challenges and opportunities**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to address you today during this 37th session of the Human Rights Council.

The complementarity between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Universal Periodic Review is very clear: the Sustainable Development Goals are grounded in human rights, and the overarching ambition of Agenda 2030 – to ‘leave no-one behind’ – is also a key aspiration of the human rights-based approach to development.

All Member States have committed to both the Universal Periodic Review and the Sustainable Development Goals, presenting a unique opportunity for the international development community to support the full realization of human rights in the countries we serve.

UNDP's work is based on the belief that people experience poverty not only as a lack of income but also as a lack of education or health care or as a lack of dignity and participation in a community. These dimensions of people's lives are considered so important that governments all around the world have acknowledged them as entitlements - as human rights - of their people, both in international and in national law.

UNDP supports human rights efforts in over 60 countries, often through joint programming and in partnership with other parts of the UN system.

In our work, we encourage countries to ground their efforts in their national development programmes and policies in human rights – what we refer to as ‘mainstreaming’ human rights - in particular by focusing on the principles of non-discrimination, participation, and accountability.

We also support the implementation of Universal Periodic Reviews and treaty body recommendations to strengthen national human rights systems and processes.

UNDP’s partnerships with human rights offices and institutions around the world contributes substantively to the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review as well as to accelerating progress towards the SDGs.

In this regard, the review provides an opportunity for important entry points for UNDP’s programming at the country level, and the review’s recommendations can also create political space for discussions with national partners on key development issues, prompting cooperation from all stakeholders, including civil society and the donor community.

We hope that the commemoration of this year’s 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides renewed opportunities to advance the human rights-based approach to programming that is needed to support implementation of the Universal Periodic Review and the achievement, by 2030, of the entire sustainable development agenda.

Thank you.

**Statement from Ms. Charlotte Petri Gornitzka,**

**Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)**

**HRC 37 HL Mainstreaming Panel on the UPR,**

**Geneva 26 February 2018**

I am representing the 30 members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, a resourceful community that extended USD 145 billion in official development assistance in 2016.

How does this resource support human rights? How do we align development co-operation with human rights efforts at the national level?

The most obvious way is to fund activities with the specific aim to enhance Human rights in other countries. According to IATI data there are now around 2300 active projects around the world with Human rights as the primary focus and the total spend in bilateral projects labelled as human rights projects was around 700 million USD in 2016.

These projects aim to empower groups to exercise their rights. It can be groups such as indigenous people, people with disabilities, specific ethnic groups or social segments. Projects also focus on building the capacity of institutions to uphold human rights, be it specific such as an Ombudsman function or a National Human Rights Institution, or a more generic institution like the police or military.

Many projects also support civil society organisations both for educating people about their human rights, equipping groups with the tools to advocate for human rights and for being the much needed watchdogs in society.

It is obvious that development co-operation and many of these projects are directly linked to the implementation of UPR recommendations. This link could be stronger and it is the responsibility of both the reviewed country and the donor country to do so. A combination of support to national institutions and civil society is often a good way to stimulate this.

Apart from the specific human rights projects many donors also mainstream human rights in all activities. This is done either with a “do no harm”-perspective where you make sure development co-operation does not have negative effects on human rights situation, or with a human rights based approach throughout you portfolio, where you make human rights a goal in all activities.

The human rights based approach is supported through the policy networks (GenderNet, GOVnet, EnviroNet, EvalNet etc) at the OECD DAC where development practitioners exchange and learn from each other.

The human rights based approach is particularly important as more and more development co-operation is in partnership with the private sector. Here the OECD offers guidance in form of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, which 48 countries have committed to. These guidelines cover the human rights impacts of business and align with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Even if these are meant for companies, donors use them too to be able to engage with private sector in the right way. The Guidelines include a non-judicial grievance mechanism, the National Contact Points, which can hear cases on human rights, labour rights etc. Human rights cases involving business account for over 50% of cases received since 2011.

The OECD has also developed guidance on supply chain due diligence for companies across key sectors including agriculture, minerals, the financial sector and garment and footwear. We are working in close collaboration with the OHCHR to develop a general due diligence guidance for all sectors due to be finalised later this year.

The Universal Periodic Reviews are not used and discussed in the DAC, which is understandable since the data, analysis and policy we agree on are generic and on a global level. However, one of the key principals that all members are committed to is the principle of ownership.

I know that when DAC members coordinate their bilateral development co-operation in a specific country context, the UPR is an important tool. When there is a will to address human rights issues, the development partners, the donors, should support and be ready to tailor their support to the recommendations put forward in the UPR.

When you look through UPR in its entirety, or read the latest Amnesty International Report you realise that we have a challenging situation regarding human rights around the world. Many people struggle to claim their rights, and too many governments fail to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

There is also evidence of growing movements for human rights, not least among the young populations and among women who continue to fight for change. Energised by real problems in their daily lives, for instance violence, corruption, environmental degradation or sexual abuse, people organise and work together to claim their rights.

It’s our job to stand by and support them.

**37ª Sesión Ordinaria del Consejo de Derechos Humanos Panel Anual de Alto Nivel sobre Transversalización de Derechos Humanos**

**"Promotion and protection of human rights in light of the UPR mechanism, challenges and opportunities”**

**Intervención de la señora Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana de Ecuador, María Fernanda Espinosa**

**Ginebra, 26 de Febrero de 2018**

Señor Presidente del Consejo de Derechos Humanos, Excelencias, señoras y señores:

Reciban un saludo del Ecuador y muy especialmente de nuestro Presidente, Lenín Moreno.

 Nuestra discusión de hoy está estrechamente vinculada con la promoción y la transversalización del Derecho internacional de los derechos humanos, en el marco del sistema universal de Naciones Unidas. Mi gobierno considera fundamental posicionar el debate sobre las normas, instituciones y mecanismos para la plena vigencia del respeto a los derechos humanos, y en ese marco, quiero resaltar especialmente el reconocimiento del EPU (Examen Periódico Universal) como el principal mecanismo universal de supervisión y evaluación de los derechos humanos.

El Ecuador ha participado en los diferentes ciclos de examen de manera puntual, de manera seria y rigurosa. Pero también en la emisión responsable de recomendaciones a otros países, así como en la fase de implementación nacional y seguimiento de las recomendaciones formuladas al país.

Nuestro país ha procurado diseñar y desarrollar mecanismos eficaces de coordinación interinstitucional, que en la práctica permiten al país fortalecer progresivamente la implementación de las recomendaciones recibidas en el EPU. Un claro ejemplo de ello fue la creación de la plataforma informática SIDERECHOS, con apoyo de la Oficina del Alto Comisionado para los Derechos Humanos, que no solo se convirtió en una herramienta básica para coordinar a nivel interinstitucional, la recopilación, procesamiento y emisión de informes para los mecanismos de derechos humanos, incluyendo por supuesto el EPU, los órganos de tratados, los procedimientos especiales y el seguimiento de las recomendaciones aceptadas; sino que además ha servido como sistema de análisis de la información estadística recogida, con el fin de identificar el nivel de cumplimiento efectivo de cada recomendación o derecho.

Adicionalmente, este sistema de información permanente sobre los 73 derechos humanos recogidos en la Constitución, constituye una plataforma para la participación social efectiva en la política pública y para el fortalecimiento de la transparencia y la rendición de cuentas en la implementación de los derechos humanos y su transverzalisación en todas las entidades y políticas públicas. Esta experiencia ecuatoriana ha servido de inspiración para el desarrollo de sistemas similares en otros países de la región, reafirmando el valor agregado de los mecanismos nacionales de preparación de informes y seguimiento en derechos humanos, así como de su potencial vinculación y ampliación hacia el seguimiento de la implementación de la Agenda 2030.

 En cuanto a los retos del EPU, resulta fundamental mantener y asegurar la credibilidad, legitimidad y el carácter constructivo de este ejercicio. Para ello, considero necesario, entre otras medidas, reforzar la integración de la perspectiva de género con relación a todos los aspectos del mecanismo, vincular el examen a la progresiva consecución de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible y estar abiertos a comentarios formulados por la sociedad civil.

Además, es importante apoyar a los Estados en el perfeccionamiento del sistema de presentación de informes y a consolidar un proceso más simple de emisión de recomendaciones, asegurando la objetividad de su contenido. La experiencia nos demuestra que no hay una receta o modelo único para el seguimiento de la implementación de las recomendaciones del EPU o de los demás mecanismos de derechos humanos. Por este motivo, consideramos necesaria la cooperación internacional para complementar y apoyar el fortalecimiento de los sistemas nacionales de derechos humanos, incluyendo el financiamiento y transferencia y desarrollo de tecnologías a favor de los países en desarrollo.

 En cuanto a la asistencia que los países requieran en cualquiera de las fases del EPU, es muy importante el apoyo pleno del Alto Comisionado, y fomentar el diálogo y la cooperación entre los Estados. Al respecto, debo señalar con gran satisfacción que mi país ya ha tenido iniciativas exitosas en este aspecto al haber asumido compromisos voluntarios durante los ciclos II y III del EPU, para compartir las buenas prácticas sobre derechos humanos de las personas con discapacidad y de las personas en movilidad humana.

 Así mismo, hemos compartido con varios países, nuestra visión y avances en la promoción y protección de derechos humanos, en relación con la agenda 2030 y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible. Antes de terminar, quiero señalar dos ideas que se relacionan con el objetivo fundamental de reforzar e impulsar el Derecho internacional de los derechos humanos. En primer lugar, la necesidad de que los Estados asuman el cumplimiento de las recomendaciones de los órganos de tratados, como parte esencial de nuestro compromiso con los derechos humanos.

En segundo lugar, la importancia de acercar los mecanismos y procesos de supervisión y promoción de los derechos humanos a la ciudadanía, a los pueblos y nacionalidades indígenas y afrodescendientes, a las mujeres, a los jóvenes y a las organizaciones de la sociedad civil.

Este acercamiento busca profundizar la democracia participativa, que se puede sintetizar en las palabras del Presidente Moreno: “nada para ustedes, sin ustedes”.

Cuenten siempre con el apoyo del Ecuador y con el compromiso para dialogar y escuchar a todos, para encontrar los caminos que nos permitan cumplir con las responsabilidades que tenemos frente a los pueblos del mundo.

 Muchas gracias.

**Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming**

***‘The promotion and protection of human rights in the light of the universal periodic review mechanism: challenges and opportunities’***

**Mary Robinson, President, Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice**

**26 February 2018, Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva**

Good evening ladies and gentleman,

At this difficult time for human rights, and human rights defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 70. We still have a journey ahead of us, because Human Rights are not an aspiration or an objective, but a minimum standard by which people can live in dignity and rights.

Through discussions like this one we show that the spirit of human rights remains steadfast. The UDHR and its related instruments were not simply an experiment or an aesthetic cover for past wrongs, but roadmaps for a brighter future. The world is facing new and complex challenges and we have made great strides in recent years in addressing some of these. Agenda 2030, The Paris Climate Agreement and the Sendai Framework are just a few. By the end of this year we hope to see two global compacts on refugees and migrants agreed. Each of these agreements and processes have included human rights as overarching principles and cross cutting issues.

The delivery of human rights based approaches in these settings requires coordination at all levels of decision making. It is here that the Universal Periodic Review and its process of reporting, accountability and implementation can contribute to the integration of human rights into these processes. The UPR did not exist in my time as High Commissioner for Human Rights, but I warmly welcomed its introduction in the HRC in 2006.

In my recent work on climate justice I have seen the capacity of the UPR to create conversations between stakeholders. I have worked with groups, such as the Geneva Pledge countries, to increase the links between climate policy makers and human rights experts domestically. Where this has occurred we have seen a significant increase in the understanding of the linkages between climate change and human rights. I hope to hear from Member States today about how these conversations can be continued and deepened. Because when we look at the work that is being undertaken under Agenda 2030 it is clear that we need to implement a more comprehensive engagement between the UPR and the Sustainable Development Goals. As I have noted, the UPR can encourage the development of national level conversations between Government Agencies and instruments, but it goes deeper than this. An effective national reporting and review mechanism will be one that takes a whole-of-society approach including the voices of civil society and in particular of women and those who are on the margins.

It is in this light that I welcome the Secretary General’s focus on the importance of national mechanisms for reporting and follow up. Where appropriately structured these bodies allow the UPR to bring together agencies, decision makers and stakeholders at all levels of society including grass roots. Appropriate integration of Agenda 2030, the UNFCCC and other international principles and objectives can better inform all parties of the rights impacts of international policy making. When a human rights expert speaks to a person in the Ministry of Environment or the Ministry of Maritime Affairs to find out the human rights implications of their development work under Agenda 2030, a discussion is started and people become centred in policies that may otherwise brush aside important human rights considerations. But equally such mechanisms must also reach the furthest behind first –and by engaging at the community and grassroots level valuable insights into the human rights impact of development can be gained.

I would like to pause here to remind us all that the Sustainable Development Goals apply to all countries, not just those in the Global South. There is a lot that can be learned by sharing experiences through fora like the UPR about the challenges faced by all countries in implementing these commitments. The link between the SDGs and human rights does not end within a country’s jurisdiction. Goals such as those on climate change and the oceans engage trans-boundary impacts on human rights. Here the UPR allows for a discussion between states on these impacts and highlights areas in which North-South and South-South cooperation can be intensified for the common good. There is another link with the implementation of the SDGs. With the third cycle of the UPR well under way, there is an opportunity to transfer the lessons and experiences of this process across to the Voluntary National Reviews under the High Level Political Forum. Analysis shows that the impact of the UPR on Member’s domestic implementation of human rights has been significant, and this should be translated to reporting in the HLPF to ensure that this too can deliver on its potential. I look forward to hearing from you all today and the valuable perspectives you can bring.