



PALAIS DES NATIONS – 1211, GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

19 January 2024

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the fourth cycle review of Serbia by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group at its 43rd session in May 2023. The constructive engagement between your Government, my Office, and the UPR mechanism is warmly welcome. As the final outcome report on the review of Serbia was recently adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 54th session, I have also taken note of the efforts of your Government to implement specific recommendations since the previous review.

A matrix of thematically clustered recommendations, starting with those supported by your Government, is available at OHCHR's website (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/rs-index>) and should be considered as part of this letter. The matrix indicates the recommending State and links each recommendation to relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In annex, I have also attached my Office's observations in light of the outcome of the fourth cycle of the UPR. In line with previous practice, I will be sending similar observations to all Member States once their fourth cycle UPR outcome is adopted by the Human Rights Council, with a view to follow-up action in close cooperation with national entities and other stakeholders.

I take this opportunity to draw your attention to the support available through the Voluntary Fund for UPR Implementation, which may be activated at the request and with the consent of a concerned State, along with tools such as the "UPR practical guidance" and the "UN good practices" repository on how the UPR process supports sustainable development, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-main>, with a view to facilitating efforts to implement UPR recommendations in line with the SDGs.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'V. Türk', written in a cursive style.

Volker Türk

His Excellency
Mr. Ivica Dačić
First Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia



Observations in light of the outcome of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review

Serbia is to be commended for its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and for starting formal procedures to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

The efforts to combat discrimination, including through the creation of the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the Anti-Discrimination Strategy (2022-2030) are appreciated, as well as the development of an instrument for the introduction of the leave no-one behind principle in law.

Concerns were raised during the review with regards to threats and attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, LGBTIQ+ persons, and members of the Roma community. Serbia is encouraged to strengthen the existing normative framework on gender equality, to adopt measures for the prohibition and prevention of all forms of discrimination and to combat hate speech.

Concerns were also raised in relation to freedom of expression, including the need to protect media freedom and pluralism. Serbia is encouraged effectively to investigate reports of intimidation, harassment and attacks against journalists and media workers. Furthermore, Serbia is encouraged to cooperate fully with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals to prosecute suspected criminals and fight against the denial and relativization of genocide and war crimes.

Serbia is also encouraged to develop an implementation plan in follow up to the UPR outcome, in close consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders, in particular the National Assembly, the judiciary, the Protector of Citizens, local and regional governments, and civil society organizations. The matrix referred in the letter may be of use in the development of such an implementation plan. The Government is encouraged to explicitly link each UPR recommendation to corresponding recommendations from other international and regional human rights mechanisms and to the relevant SDG and its targets. This will, in turn, facilitate the creation of synergies between UPR implementation and SDG-related actions and reporting within the context of the Voluntary National Review (VNR).

The Government is also encouraged to further strengthen the Government Council for Monitoring the Implementation of United Nations Recommendations for Human Rights, with the aim of ensuring a coordinated and effective approach to reporting to international human rights mechanisms, and to implementing the recommendations, in line with the guidance provided by OHCHR following regional consultations and the High Commissioner's report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/50/64](#)).



Further, an important measure that could positively contribute to follow-up action is voluntary mid-term UPR reporting. All Member States are encouraged to submit a voluntary mid-term UPR report some two years after the adoption of the UPR outcome. In this regard, the Government of Serbia may wish to continue with the practice of submitting a mid-term report on follow-up to the fourth cycle UPR recommendations by 2025, detailing both implementation efforts as well as challenges to implementation, including the possible need for technical or capacity-building assistance.

OHCHR
19 January 2024