



PALAIS DES NATIONS – 1211, GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

9 October 2024

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the fourth cycle review of Belize by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group at its 45th session in January-February 2024. As the final outcome report on the review of Belize was recently adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 56th session, I have 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/bz-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.

Volker Türk

His Excellency
Mr. Francis Fonseca
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize



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

The commitment of Belize to enhance its collaboration with international human rights mechanisms, including the submission of pending periodic reports to various treaty bodies and its openness to consider issuing invitations to United Nations special procedures mandate holders on a case-by-case basis is positively noted. In this regard, extending a standing invitation to special procedures mandate holders would be a welcome development. The ratification of the regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) is a commendable step in enhancing access to information and transparency and advancing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Belize is encouraged to take the necessary measures to implement it.

Positive note is also taken of Belize's decision to transition the Office of the Ombudsman into a National Human Rights Institution fully compliant with the Paris Principles. To that end, the provision of adequate resources would ensure the effective functioning of the Office of the Ombudsman. Belize could also consider establishing a national mechanism for the prevention of torture, in accordance with its obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

During the review, concerns were raised with regards to several areas in which progress is needed, including the lack of a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, especially to protect LGBTIQ+ persons; cases of excessive use of force by law enforcement agents; poor detention conditions; human trafficking; and access to sexual and reproductive health care, including safe and legal abortion. Belize is invited to adopt further measures to ensure the full respect of human rights for all.

While recognizing efforts made to ensure the recognition and protection of customary land tenure of Maya Indigenous Peoples, Belize is encouraged to ensure consultation with all affected Indigenous Peoples, with a view to obtaining their free, prior, and informed consent, in compliance with the 2015 consent order of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

Belize 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 parliament, the judiciary, local and regional governments, and civil society organizations. The matrix 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 encouraged to formally establish the Inter-Institutional Review Committee, 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 in about two years after the adoption of the UPR outcome. In this regard, the Government of Belize may wish to consider submitting a mid-term report on follow-up to the fourth cycle UPR recommendations by 2026, detailing both implementation efforts as well as challenges to implementation, including the possible need for technical or capacity-building assistance.

OHCHR
9 October 2024