

Universal Periodic Review (Fourth Cycle)

Information and guidelines for UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and UN entities' written submissions to the UPR Compilation

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. OHCHR has developed 3rd UPR cycle tools meant to facilitate implementation and follow up at country level through the UN system and OHCHR. *(Additional 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. UN entities are 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. UN entities are also invited to report not only on accepted recommendations falling within their mandate but also on noted recommendations. The latter may be particularly useful in identifying risks areas and in prevention efforts.

4. For the first cycle of the review, 68 UN entities, including 44 UNCTs, engaged with the UPR, by submitting over 300 reports for 156 countries that highlighted human rights situations, priority issues and good practices in the countries under consideration. During the second cycle, this increased to 484 submissions from 107 UN entities, including 94 UNCTs. During this last third cycle, 485 submissions were received from 123 UN entities, including 107 UNCTs. UNCTs and UN entities are encouraged to continue actively engaging in the UPR process by, *inter alia*, providing updated information in the form of **written submissions** for the UN Compilation reports during the fourth cycle.

II. Written submissions contribution

A. Content

5. 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. UN entities 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. UN entities are encouraged to include information on implementation, notably as linked to recommendations from the 3rd cycle.

6. 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, including comments on its impact and on the enjoyment of human rights; regressive actions if any; and the identification of the actions that remain to be taken for full implementation, if any.

- 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. UN entities are invited to consult the wide range of tools developed by OHCHR to help measure progress on human rights (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms/human-rights-indicators>).
- b) UN entities 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 UN entities 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 Compilation of UN information. The submission of the matrix should not replace the main contribution provided by the UN entity.
- e) When preparing their written submissions, UN entities should consider linking relevant human rights topics and recommendations issued by human rights mechanisms with their corresponding 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- f) UN entities are encouraged to make contributions that are as clearly structured as possible. It is also encouraged that written contributions comprehensively cover the major human rights issues, including civil and political, as well as economic, social, cultural rights at the national, sub-national/federal/regional, and local level.

7. 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.

8. Practical suggestions

a) First-hand information should be given priority, as well as the UN entities' 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. UN entities should refrain from relying on and citing information from third-country state agencies.

b) While **referring to information attributed to United Nations mechanisms in their submission**, UN entities 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, as the latter are expected to be reflected in the UN compilation prepared by OHCHR. UN submissions should, therefore, focus on the status of implementation of human rights mechanisms' recommendations.

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

d) With respect to **annexes**, UN entities 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, UN entities 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

9. **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.

10. **Identification** - Written submissions should be clearly identifiable. The cover page of the main submission should clearly identify the submitting organization/s (letterhead, name and acronym, logo, webpage, email and postal address, etc.). In the case of joint submissions by several individual UN entities, the submission should clearly identify the main submitting UN entity, followed by the other submitting UN entities. For UNCT joint submissions, a list of submitting UN entities 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.

11. **Length** – Individual written submissions must not exceed 2815 words (additional documentation can be annexed for reference). Joint submissions, such as a UNCT submission, 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** - UN entities should only use endnotes to reference information. Endnotes should not include any substantive information as it will not be taken into consideration in the compilation.

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. UN entities 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 UN entities are encouraged, when these entities 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. UN entities submissions will be considered “official United Nations document”, in line with resolution 5/1. 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 organization/s.

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. UN entities 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 UN submissions are the same as those for submissions by other relevant stakeholders,

e.g. non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, etc. They will be regularly posted on the OHCHR-UPR website (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/NgosNhris.aspx>). UN entities should check regularly the above-mentioned webpage, in case that updates (or extensions) are announced.

20. UN entities 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. UN 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 UN entities will be requested to open an organizational profile in the system. Before opening a profile, make sure to confirm whether the UN entity had already registered a profile in previous cycles. In case of doubt, please, contact the **UPR Submissions helpdesk** (ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org).

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. UN entities may submit one individual contribution and submit one joint submission, and they may participate in multiple joint contributions, e.g. UNCT contribution, per country (per session). When submitting joint contributions on behalf of a group, all organizations participating in the submission should be listed and the main submitting organization should be clearly identified. For technical reasons, when submitting joint contributions, UN entities are

encouraged to register them in the **On-line UPR Submissions Registration System** as individual.

27. Should UN entities need to provide more than one joint contribution on behalf of a number of organizations, it is advisable to contact the **UPR Submissions Helpdesk** (ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org) to get assistance and avoid duplicating organizational profiles.

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, UN entities will receive an automatic confirmation of their submission. UN entities 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 UN entities 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** (ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org).

31. Should UN entities encounter technical problems using the on-line system, please, send email to the **UPR Submissions Helpdesk** (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.

In 2020, following a request made by the Secretary General in launching his Call to Action for Human Rights on 24 February 2020, OHCHR, in consultation with the entire UN system, prepared a **UPR Practical Guidance on Maximizing the use of the UPR at Country level**, that can be downloaded from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx> in the six official languages of the UN ([العربية | 中文 | **English** | **Français** | **Русский** | **Español**]). This guidance aims at providing advice on how UN entities at country level can engage in the UPR process to support progress by Member States on human rights and the SDGs, as well as on the prevention and sustaining peace agenda.

The guidance includes practical steps for UN entities to engage with the UPR, not only in terms of updated written submissions for the UPR compilation report, but also supporting an effective review of the implementation of the recommendations. In line with their respective mandates, UN entities could also inject their inputs in the UPR process, including for the purpose of the development of recommendations, which could subsequently be pursued by supporting the State in implementing the recommendations.

After each review of the third cycle, the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been sending letters to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of those countries that were reviewed, highlighting areas that require particular attention over the next four and a half years - prior to the next cycle of the UPR. These letters provide an overview of the human rights priorities in terms of follow up based on recommendations issued by the UPR mechanism. The letters aim to contribute to the implementation at the national level of recommendations resulting from human rights mechanisms. UN entities may find these letters useful for the work they deploy at country level. The letters, jointly with a matrix and an infographic of recommendations issued are available at:

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

- **OHCHR UPR main webpage:**

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

- **OHCHR Basic Facts about UPR:**

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

- **Official UPR country documentation 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>

- **OHCHR UPR webpage for NGOs and NHRIs:**
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/NgosNhris.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>
- **Strengthening Engagement with the International Human Rights Mechanisms—A web-based guide (UNDP):**
<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/strengthening-international-human-rights>
- **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>

How to contact us:

1. **UPR Submissions Helpdesk:** ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org
2. **UPR UN Entities Helpdesk:** ohchr-uprunentities@un.org

