



UN good practices

How the universal
periodic review process
supports sustainable
development

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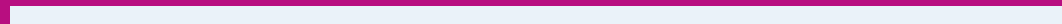
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Acknowledgements

This publication is an outcome of a joint initiative of United Nations Development Programme, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Development Coordination Office, supported by the UNSDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund.

This report was authored by Professor Alan Miller, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow and Iryna Yakovlieva with substantive contributions and support also provided by Sarah Rattray, Roqaya Dhaif, Gianni Magazzeni, Maria Soledad Pazo, Antonio Cisneros and Romina Sta Clara based on contributions from across the UN system.

It has benefited by engagement from across the UN system including, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Children Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, and a variety of UN Country Teams and United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices.

Acronyms

CCA	Common Country Analysis
CSO	Civil society organisations
HRA	Human Rights Adviser
ILO	International Labor Organisation
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer
NGO	non-governmental organization
NHRI	National human rights institution
NMRF	National mechanism for reporting and follow-up
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
OHCHR	United Nations Office for Human Rights
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
GBV	gender-based violence
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCTs	United Nations country teams
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSCDF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review

Foreword

As the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review process draws to a close – maintaining 100% participation by States in the reviews, with the involvement of all branches of the Government at the highest level - we see great merit in launching this Repository of **UN good practices on how the Universal Periodic Review process supports sustainable development**.

As a living document, the Repository captures how the UPR has been able to advance the promotion and protection of human rights and to secure greater compliance, in law and in practice, with international human rights norms or with commitments made by States in UN and regional human rights mechanisms, in all regions of the world.

Captured from over 60 experiences shared from across the UN system, key findings show that UNCTs and UN entities in all regions are supporting governments to engage throughout the UPR process and integrating the UPR into UN programming and planning in line with their specific mandates.

UPR recommendations are increasingly integrated and aligned in UN efforts at achieving the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and the UPR has been essential to support dialogues and advocacy efforts by UNCTs and UN entities, as a practical problem-solving tool to address sensitive and priority development challenges, leading to concrete results.

The predictability of the UPR, with the calendar set well in advance, over a period of 4.5 years, the sovereign decisions made by States in front of their peers, the information provided by the UN and other stakeholders for the reviews and the tools developed as a result of the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights – especially the **UPR Practical Guidance**, [العربية | 中文 | English | Français | Русский | Español] have encouraged greater coordination, implementation and follow-up action within the structures of the State. They have also increasingly engendered the pro-active participation of local and regional governments, national human rights institutions and civil society, before, during, and after the reviews.

With the fourth cycle of the UPR commencing in November 2022, and with a focus on enhanced implementation of recommendations received and accepted by the State, the role of Resident Coordinators and the entire UN System becomes even more relevant in maximizing the use of this human rights mechanism as an entry point for national policies and action on human rights. We encourage colleagues across the UN system to take inspiration from this initial set of concrete, positive, national experiences.



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Introduction

Bringing tangible changes to the lives of individuals, communities and countries is the ultimate goal of the United Nations. Three interlinked pillars shape the UN's priorities: peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. In 2015, all UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet and grounded on human rights¹.



Universal Periodic Review (UPR) — a unique process informed by observations and recommendations made by human rights treaty bodies, special procedures mandate holders, the UN in-country system as well as regional mechanisms, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organisations (CSOs).

Within the UN system, multiple mechanisms are available to support governments, state entities, civil society, business, and other actors in their efforts to bring lasting peace, reduce inequalities, promote, and protect human rights, build greener economies, and ensure sustainable development. These mechanisms assist countries as they progress in fulfilling their international obligations and commitments to people, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

One such mechanism is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – a unique process, established in 2006 as a state-to-state peer review, taking place every five years. It is informed by observations and recommendations made by human rights treaty bodies, special procedures mandate holders, the UN in-country system as well as regional mechanisms, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society organisations (CSOs). The UPR provides an opportunity for all states to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their countries. As of 2021, the UPR is in its third cycle and there is now 100% participation by member states².

On average each state receives over two hundred recommendations covering all human rights including specific issues relating to women and children, health, education, labour, the environment, climate, migration, displacement and, where relevant, international humanitarian law.

Those UPR recommendations accepted by the state, in front of all its peers and other stakeholders, present important entry points for positive engagement and advocacy in areas within the mandate of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and peace missions, even in the most difficult human rights environments. With participation at the highest level of the various branches of the government, recommendations from the UPR have delivered real change including stronger national protection systems, more independent and effective institutions, as well as laws and practices more consistent with international human rights standards.

In 2020, the Secretary-General issued *Maximizing the use of the Universal Periodic Review at country level – Practical Guidance*³ (hereinafter UN Practical Guidance) which was prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in coordination with other UN entities.

The Secretary-General stated in his 2021 annual Report on the Work of the Organisation to the General Assembly that “substantial efforts have been made, including under my call to action, to advance the integration of human rights into development interventions at the country level. New guidance allows United Nations field presences to better align their work with recommendations of the universal periodic reviews...”⁴

The UN Practical Guidance outlines steps that the Resident Coordinator (RC) and UNCTs can undertake before, during and after the review supported by tools made available online⁵.

The purpose of this publication is to collect, in one place, examples of how UNCTs and individual entities have used and engaged with the UPR as an effective tool for action and advocacy and a source of information for technical cooperation and to inform programmes to fully integrate the advancement of human rights with efforts to achieve the SDGs, often in close partnership and cooperation with states and other stakeholders. This publication builds on the UN Practical Guidance to highlight trends and provide recommendations on how the UN can utilise the UPR to support progress by member states on human rights and the achievement of the SDGs as well as conflict and violence prevention, and sustaining peace initiatives. It also presents an analysis of how the UPR can be and has already been used to respond to challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eighteen examples curated in this publication present a diverse selection of good practices of UN engagement in the UPR process. This compilation, as well as a wider repository, is a living recording of good practice and will be further developed over time as practice continues to grow and as there are more trends and themes to explore.



18 examples

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