SIDE EVENT

Supporting States, Realizing Rights: the 4th cycle of the UPR and 15th Anniversary of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review

Concept note

Date and venue: Thursday 3 November 2022, UN Headquarters – Conference Room 11

Time: 13h15 – 14h45

Programme Chair/Moderator:

- H.E Ambassador Omar Hilale
  Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Morocco

Opening statements:

- H.E. Mr. Federico Villegas
  President of the Human Rights Council

- Ms Ilze Brands Kehris
  Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, OHCHR

- Ms. Asako Okai
  Assistant Secretary-General and Director, UNDP Crisis Bureau

- Mr Oscar Fernandez-Taranco
  Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Development Coordination, DCO

Panel Discussions:

- H.E. Mr. José Alfonso Blanco Conde
  Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Dominican Republic, Chair of Third Committee

- H.E. Mr. Antonio Manuel Revilla Lagdameo
  Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines - tbc

- H.E. Ms. Mathu Joyini
  Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of South Africa -tbc

Interventions from the floor
The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. It is based on equal treatment for all countries and provides an opportunity for them to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. The ultimate goal of UPR is the improvement of the human rights situation in every country.

The UPR, which concluded its 3rd cycle in 2022 with 100% participation by States, is at the heart of efforts to domesticate international human rights norms and to translate them into consistent laws and practices at national level. The outcomes from the UPR can serve as a guide for Member States, the United Nations and the wider international community to work collaboratively to follow-up to the recommendations made by all international human rights mechanisms and link them to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The fourth cycle of the UPR will start in November 2022 and will be an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of recommendations received during the previous reviews and to renew efforts towards enhanced implementation of recommendations.

The Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review (Voluntary Fund for Implementation) was established by the Human Rights Council in 2007 to provide financial and technical assistance to help countries, in particular least developed countries (LDC) and small island developing States (SIDS), implement recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review in consultation with, and with the consent of, the country concerned. Since its establishment, the Voluntary Fund has supported activities in 76 countries and allowed the organization of regional events to promote the sharing of good practices.

The overlapping context of the upcoming fourth cycle of the universal periodic review and the fifteen anniversary of the Voluntary Fund for Implementation provides a good opportunity for Member States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders to collectively reflect on the achievements, good practices and lessons learnt from the implementation of UPR recommendations during the last 15 years as well as on how the use of the Voluntary Fund can be further optimized in support of developing States, particularly LDC and SIDS. In this context, the side event will gather high-level representatives of States and other relevant stakeholders to:

a) discuss progresses in the implementation of UPR recommendations by States and in their integration at the country level with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals – in line with the Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights and Our Common Agenda;

b) showcase available tools to support States and other stakeholders in the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the UPR.

c) take stock, through concrete examples, of the achievements of the Voluntary Fund in ensuring the implementation of UPR recommendations through nationally-owned processes; and

d) promote access by States to the financial and technical assistance available through the Voluntary Fund, and mobilize their support to it as part of the enhanced focus on implementation of the 4th cycle of the UPR - starting in November 2022.
**Outcome:**

The event will contribute to the following outcomes:

- Better awareness of implementation of UPR recommendations by States and their integration at the country level with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and the efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals – in line with the Secretary-General’s Call to Action for Human Rights and Our Common Agenda.
- Better awareness of the tools available to facilitate follow up, such as the “Practical Guidance on maximizing the use of the universal periodic review at the country level” and the “Repository of United Nations good practices on how the universal periodic review supports sustainable development”.
- Better understanding of the opportunities provided by the UPR Voluntary Fund for Implementation to ensure that States receive appropriate and dedicated financial and technical assistance to implement the recommendations emanating from the UPR.
- Sharing of experiences by States on the implementation of recommendations emanating from the UPR.

**Format:**

The duration of the side event will be one hour and a half. The opening statements and presentations will be followed by interventions from the floor and concluding remarks.

**Background:**

The UPR is a universal peer-review mechanism whose main objective is to improve the human rights situation on the ground through nationally owned processes. States lead the UPR process and make sovereign decisions on recommendations they support – thus prioritize for action over the next five years. The UPR relies for its content on the work of the UN human Rights Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures Mandate Holders and on recommendations made by OHCHR and the entire UN system. The essential contribution of Regional Human Rights Mechanisms (RHRMs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and NGOs ensure that the reviews include all critical protection concerns.

Since the start of the third cycle of the UPR, OHCHR has produced tools to facilitate follow-up to recommendations by States and the integration of recommendations into the United Nations country programming processes. Such tools include the elaboration, for each country reviewed, of matrices of thematically clustered recommendations, linked to specific Sustainable Development Goals, and of infographics reflecting trends between the second and third cycle of the review process in terms of accepted recommendations. As an additional tool to assist United Nations entities in engaging with the mechanism, OHCHR promoted the application of the “Practical Guidance on maximizing the use of the universal periodic review at the country level” and created, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the Development Coordination Office, a “Repository of United Nations good practices on how the universal periodic review supports sustainable development”.

The UPR Voluntary Fund for Implementation was established in 2007 by Human Rights Council resolution 6/17 and further strengthened in 2011 by resolution 16/21. It provides financial and technical assistance to help countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, implement recommendations emanating from the UPR in consultation with, and with the consent of, the country concerned.

The Fund provides seed funding to enhance national capacities to implement key UPR recommendations, strengthen Governments’ institutional capacity to ensure a comprehensive follow up and reporting on the progresses achieved, enhance the role of Parliaments, and strengthen UNCTs to support national efforts to implement human rights mechanisms recommendations and integrate them with initiatives to achieve the SDGs. Since its establishment, the Fund has provided support to activities in 76 countries.
Policy guidance to the operationalization of the Fund is provided by the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund, composed of the members of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 6/30, the Voluntary Fund encourages proposals aimed at achieving gender equality and advancing women’s rights.

**Background documents:**

- OHCHR web page on the universal periodic review: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx


- OHCHR web page on the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/trust-fund-implementation


- Practical Guidance on maximizing the use of the universal periodic review at the country level UPR_Practical_Guidance.pdf (ohchr.org)