

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW: INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS¹

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique human rights mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council, that examines the human rights situation of UN member states every 5 years.

The UPR review is based on 3 documents:

1. The National Report by the State under Review (SuR)
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)

HOW CAN CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATE?

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can submit **written information**, known as shadow reports, which will be added to information submitted by other stakeholders, contributing to the final report considered during the review.

Although CSOs cannot take the floor at the review itself, they can propose draft **recommendations** to the Recommending States (RS) of the UPR Working Group (WG) through this written information. This allows RS to access to information from sources other than the government of the State when making their comments and recommendations at the UPR examination.

The purpose of the written reports of the CSOs is to provide **relevant information** to the Recommending States on the situation of the States under Review (SuR), so that they can make appropriate recommendations.

These reports can be submitted in two different moments of the cycle and the guidelines provided in this documents apply to both: the review and the mid-term review.

CONTENT OF THE WRITTEN INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY CSOS

What should submissions contain?

In their contributions, Civil Society Organisations are encouraged to include information on the follow-up to the preceding review, as well as on developments or relevant issues not addressed during previous reviews.

Submissions must contain credible and reliable information on the human rights situation in the State under Review, highlighting the main issues of concern and best practices and recommendations in this regard.

Shadow reports must cover the period since the last review. They should prioritize recommendations from the previous cycles, especially the ones received the last one, and should report on the status of implementation and how they have been implemented.

Submissions should be focused and analytical. Conclusions should be based on a comprehensive analysis of

¹ Information provided in this document is a summary based directly on:
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/2022-10-24/UPR-4th-cycle-civil-society-guide.pdf>
<https://www.upr-info.org/en>

the situation, and achievements, concerns and recommendations should be clearly and concisely formulated. Reports must not contain abusive language, must adhere to word limits, established deadline and required format.

Priority will be given to the submissions specifically tailored for the UPR and that contain information on the follow-up to the preceding reviews, including an assessment and comments on the implementation of recommendations and developments since the last review.

How should recommendations be treated?

The application of recommendations must be subject to analysis. Its impact on the enjoyment of human rights must be assessed; as well as any regressive actions there may be.

Implementation of recommendations from previous cycles should be considered and presented clearly. Each recommendation should be completely identified (HRC report, cycle, paragraph number, recommendation number and recommending country), also indicating the cases in which the recommendation is repeated.

The level of implementation of previous recommendations may be measured by using values (i.e. numbers, percentages, or categories such as “fully implemented”, “partially implemented”, “in the process of implementation” or “not implemented yet”), with relevant explanations. The traffic light system is an effective way of giving this information.

Actions not fully implemented should be identified and should be included in the form of a recommendation to the State. Challenges or technical cooperation needs must be identified in the case of unimplemented recommendations.

New recommendations and reiterated previous ones 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.

A matrix of thematically clustered recommendations shall be posted on the OHCHR-UPR country pages at ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/documentation.

CSOs may find it useful to add into the column in the matrix of thematically clustered recommendations any such values and comments 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). The submission of the matrix should not replace the main contribution provided by the CSO.

Some practical suggestions

- First-hand information should be given priority, as well as the CSO's own views, findings and conclusions. Second-hand information should be referenced and referred to in endnotes and included only if necessary.
- While referring to information attributed to United Nations bodies/agencies and/or mechanisms in their submission, CSOs 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 or reports by UN bodies/agencies, as the latter are expected to be reflected in the UN compilation prepared by OHCHR.
- Only submissions and annexes to the submissions which are used for the summary will be uploaded. CSOs are encouraged to make submissions accessible for persons with disabilities.
- With respect to annexes, CSOs 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, CSOs 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.

FORMAT

Document format

Use word documents only – Written (main) submissions should be saved and submitted as a Word document only.

Identification

Written submissions should be **clearly identifiable**. The submitting CSO(s) identification should be on the cover page of the main submission (letterhead, name and acronym, logo, webpage, email and postal address, etc.). For joint submissions, a list of organizations should be added as an endnote in the cover page or as an annex to the document.

Brief description of main activities of the organization/coalition (not to be included in the word count)

The cover page should include a paragraph describing the **main activities** of the submitting organization/coalition, and the **date of establishment**, especially for those organizations which interrelate for the first time with the UN.

Length

Individual written submissions must not exceed **2815 words** (additional documentation can be annexed for reference). **Joint submissions** must not exceed **5630 words**. The cover page, endnotes and annexes will not be counted within the word/page limits of contributions.

Use of endnotes

CSOs should only use endnotes to **reference information**. Endnotes should not include any substantive information therein as it will not be taken into consideration in the summary.

Numbering paragraphs and pages

For ease of reference, paragraphs and pages should be **numbered**.

Language

Written contributions should be submitted in **one of the UN official languages and preferably in English, French or Spanish**.

METHODOLOGY

CSOs 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 CSOs are **encouraged**, when they focus on issues of similar nature.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The UPR mechanism **does not provide for confidentiality** and is conducted on the basis of public documents. Submissions which respect the abovementioned guidelines, as originally received will be publicly made available on OHCHR's – UPR country webpages, with the name of the submitting CSO(s).

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.

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 at reprisals@ohchr.org.**

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

When to submit written contributions. Deadlines

Tentative deadlines for CSOs' submissions can be found on the [OHCHR UPR webpage](#).

Possible updates (or extensions) are announced there. It's also very useful to visit [upr-info.org](#).

CSOs should send written submissions to OHCHR **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 [ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ngos-nhris](#).

Please note that **submissions received after established deadlines will not be considered**.

Written submissions should be **final**.

Where to submit written contributions

CSOs' submissions should be sent only through the "On-line UPR Submissions Registration System" available at [uprdoc.ohchr.org](#).

How to submit written contributions

Be aware that all contributing organizations – national and international, individual organizations or coalition of organizations – will be requested to open an **organizational profile** in the system.

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.

Contributing organizations **may submit one individual contribution and participate in one or more joint contributions** per country (per session). When submitting joint contributions on behalf of coalitions, it is advisable to create a separate profile for each coalition.

Should organizations need to provide **more than one joint submission on behalf of a number of coalitions**, it is advisable to **contact the UPR Submissions Helpdesk** at uprsubmissions@ohchr.org to get assistance and avoid duplicating organizational profiles.

All submissions used by the Secretariat will be listed in the Endnote 1 of the Summary report and posted on the UPR country webpages. Joint submissions will be referred to in the UPR documentation as 'Joint submissions' and identified with a number, as well as with the name of the Coalition and/or the list of organizations which form part of the coalition.

Contributing organizations can submit: (a) **a cover letter/page**; (b) **one main submission** (and translations in different UN languages) and (c) **a maximum of 10 annexes**.

Once contributions have been uploaded in the system, organizations will receive an automatic confirmation of their submission. Organizations can also consult their contributions history in the on-line system at any time. No additional confirmation by the OHCHR Secretariat will be sent.

The system does not allow organizations 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.

Should organizations encounter technical problems using the on-line system, please contact the **UPR Submissions Helpdesk**.