

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

the situation, and achievements, concerns and recommendations. Reports must not contain abusive language, must adhere to word format.

Priority will be given to the submissions specifically tailored to the follow-up to the preceding reviews, including an assessment of recommendations and developments since the last review.

How should recommendations be treated?

The application of recommendations must be subject to analysis. Implementation must be assessed; as well as any regressive actions there may be.

Implementation of recommendations from previous cycles should be tracked. Each recommendation should be completely identified (HRC report, cycle number and recommending country), also indicating the cases identified.

The level of implementation of previous recommendations may be indicated by percentages, or categories "substantially implemented", "in the process of implementation" or "not implemented yet"), with relevant explanation of giving this information.

Actions not fully implemented should be identified and should be linked to the State. Challenges or technical cooperation needs must be identified for recommendations.

New recommendations and reiterated previous ones should be Specific, Result-Oriented and Time-Bound, and linked to the themes addressed.

A matrix of thematically clustered recommendations is available at [ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/documentation](https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/documentation).

CSOs may find it useful to add into the column in the matrix on implementation such values and comments on the implementation of previous recommendations as an annex to the main contribution (its input would not be reflected in the matrix should not replace the main contribution provided by the State).

Some practical suggestions

- First-hand information should be given priority, as well as second-hand information should be referenced and referred to.
- While referring to information attributed to United Nations Human Rights Council submission, CSOs should consider, to the extent possible, not concluding observations and recommendations of the human rights procedures of the HRC or reports by UN bodies/agencies, as well as compilation prepared by OHCHR.
- Only submissions and annexes to the submissions which are user-friendly are encouraged to make submissions accessible for persons with disabilities.
- With respect to annexes, CSOs may submit annexes in order to better understand the situation or to support a substantive issue (e.g. additional information see...). Reports from other organizations, pictures, videos, etc. submitted as an annex. When available, CSOs may also share progress reports) by including them in an annex. Annexes to the OHCHR UPR submissions website, but information contained in them is not part of the UPR process.

FORMAT

Document format

Use word documents only - Written (main) submissions should be submitted in Microsoft Word document format.

Identification

Written submissions should be clearly identifiable. The submitting CSO(s) identification should appear on the cover page of the main submission (letterhead, name and address, etc.). For joint submissions, a list of organizations should appear on 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 brief description of the main activities of the organization/coalition, and the date of establishment, especially for organizations that are newly established or interrelate for the first time with the UN.

Length

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

Use of endnotes

CSOs should only use endnotes to reference information. Endnotes should not be used to provide information therein as it will not be taken into consideration.

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: English, French or Spanish.

METHODOLOGY

CSOs are encouraged to consult with one another at the national level. Joint submissions by a large number of CSOs are encouraged, when of similar nature.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The UPR mechanism does not provide for confidentiality and is conducted on the basis of publicly available information. Submissions which respect the abovementioned guidelines should not be made publicly available on OHCHR's - UPR country webpages.

Reference to individual cases should be made only if the safety and well-being of individuals will not be jeopardised by such a reference.

Addressing acts of intimidation and reprisal against those who have cooperated with the United Nations in the field of human rights is a priority. Any act of intimidation or reprisal should be promptly reported at reprisals@ohchr.org.

