

The Universal Periodic Review has great potential to promote and protect human rights in the darkest corners of the world

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process 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 UPR was created through the UN General Assembly on 15 March 2006 by resolution 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council itself. It is a cooperative process which, by October 2011, had reviewed the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. Currently, no other universal mechanism of this kind exists. The UPR is one of the key elements of the Council which reminds States of their responsibility to fully respect and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The ultimate aim of this mechanism is to improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations wherever they occur.

The reviews are conducted by the UPR Working Group which consists of the 47 members of the Council; however any UN Member State can take part in the discussion/dialogue with the reviewed States. Each State review is assisted by groups of three States, known as “troikas”, who serve as rapporteurs. The selection of the troikas for each State is done through a drawing of lots following elections for the Council membership in the General Assembly.

The documents on which the reviews are based are: 1) information provided by the State under review, which can take the form of a “national report”; 2) information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts, the Special Procedures (the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing) and human rights treaty bodies, as well as UN entities; 3) information from other stakeholders including national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations.



Reviews take place through an interactive discussion between the State under review and other UN Member States. This takes place during a meeting of the UPR Working Group. During this discussion any UN Member State can pose questions, comments and/or make recommendations to the States under review. The troikas may group issues or questions to be shared with the State under review to ensure that the interactive dialogue takes place in a smooth and orderly manner.

Following the review by the Working Group, a report is prepared by the troika with the involvement of the State under review. This report, referred to as the “outcome report”, provides a summary of the actual discussion. It therefore consists of the questions, comments and recommendations made by States to the country under review, as well as the responses by the reviewed State.

During the Working Group session half an hour is allocated to adopt each of the “outcome reports” for the States reviewed during that session. These validation sessions take place no sooner than 48 hours after the country review. The reviewed State has the opportunity to make preliminary comments on the recommendations, choosing to either accept or note them. Both accepted and noted recommendations are included in the report.

The State has the primary responsibility to implement the recommendations contained in the final outcome. The UPR ensures that all countries are accountable for progress or failure in implementing these recommendations. During the second review the State is expected to provide information on what they have been doing to implement the recommendations made during the first review as well as on any developments in the field of human rights.

Why should UN-Habitat contribute to the UPR?

UN-Habitat is specifically mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. Further, as part of the UN family, UN-Habitat is mandated to respect, promote, and protect human rights in its activities. All of UN-Habitat’s interventions are underpinned by values contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that promote the right to an adequate standard of living, of which the right to adequate housing is a part. UN-Habitat is also a key agency in the implementation of the right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

While all of UN-Habitat’s interventions are underpinned by universal values, as part of the UN Development Group, the Programme has additionally adopted “human rights mainstreaming” as one of its priorities and is explicitly applying it to its strategies and programmatic implementation alike. UN-Habitat commenced cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as early as 2002 to work together for the comprehensive and progressive realization of Housing



Rights under the auspices of the joint United Nations Housing Rights Programme. In early 2013 mainstreaming of human rights was approved as a priority issue by the UN-Habitat Governing Council through its inclusion in the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan. Mainstreaming human rights means in practice applying a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to all of UN-Habitat's activities.

According to the human rights-based approach, the **process of urbanization should adhere to the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, inclusion and participation, accountability and the rule of law. Concurrently, the city, as the outcome of this process, should meet specified human rights standards**, for instance: adequate housing, access to water and sanitation, health and education services, work, participation in decisions that affect city inhabitants, or any other rights codified in the human rights treaties ratified by the country in question.

To further stress the central importance of human rights within the UN, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon launched the "Human Rights Up Front" initiative in December 2013. The Rights Up Front initiative recommends six actions to more effectively secure human rights throughout all of the UN's engagements. The UPR provides an opportunity to especially fulfil Action 2 (Providing Member States – those under review as well as those reviewing – with candid information with respect to peoples at risk of, or subject to, serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law).

The UPR human rights mechanism therefore **provides UN-Habitat with a unique opportunity to practically fulfill its human rights mandate by strengthening and enforcing UN-Habitat's rights based approach** to hold Member States accountable for their obligations to fulfill the human right to adequate housing and basic services. UN-Habitat may therefore utilize as appropriate this mechanism to cooperate with Member States on realizing housing rights for all both prior to and after the UPR review. To illustrate the possibility to use the UPR as entry points for UN-Habitat engagement, the UPR recommendations accepted by 33 countries of the LAC region during the first review circle included 20 recommendations on the right to adequate housing, 12 recommendations on the right to water and sanitation (basic services) and 24 recommendations on the "right to land".

How can UN-Habitat contribute to the UPR?

There are basically **two entry points** for UN-Habitat to contribute to the UPR:

First, prior to the review by contributing reports on which the reviews will be based; and **second, after** the review by helping countries to implement the recommendations agreed on during the review.

Considering UN-Habitat's mandate, its main contribution to this human rights mechanism will naturally be on housing rights (the human right on adequate housing and basic services) and all issues connected



to housing rights. Reports shall be submitted through the Habitat Program Manager for the particular country in the Regional Office for the region concerned.

The **next deadlines** for submitting reports to the UPR on particular countries are:

23rd session (2-13 November 2015) – session dates to be confirmed	23 March 2015	Micronesia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Nauru, Rwanda, Nepal, Saint Lucia, Oman, Austria, Myanmar, Australia, Georgia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sao Tome and Principe
24th session (January/February 2016) – session dates to be confirmed	22 June 2015 tentative	Namibia, Niger, Mozambique, Estonia, Paraguay, Belgium, Denmark, Palau, Somalia, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Latvia, Sierra Leone, Singapore
25th session (April/May 2016) – session dates to be confirmed	21 September 2015 tentative	Suriname, Greece, Samoa, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Hungary, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Antigua and Barbuda, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, Thailand, Ireland
26th session (October/November 2016) – session dates to be confirmed	21 March 2016 tentative	Togo, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Iceland, Zimbabwe, Lithuania, Uganda, Timor Leste, Republic of Moldova, Haiti, South Sudan

UN entities can submit their contributions for each session online within 15 days before the announced deadline via: <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org>

For further information and updates on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) visit:

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/BasicFacts.aspx> and

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/uprmain.aspx>

Or contact **UN-Habitat's Human Rights Focal Points:**

Christophe Lalande

Leader, Housing Unit

Housing and Slum Upgrading Branch

Christophe.lalande@unhabitat.org

Channe Lindstrøm Oğuzhan

Ass. Human Settlements Officer

Housing and Slum Upgrading Branch

channe.oguzhan@unhabitat.org

