

Indicator	Status of ratification of a core international human rights treaty or its optional protocol
Definition	The indicator refers to the expression by the State of its consent to be bound by a human rights treaty under international law. A “State party” to a treaty is a State that has expressed its consent, by an act of ratification, accession or succession, and where the treaty has entered into force (or a State about to become a party after formal reception by the United Nations Secretariat of the State’s decision to be a party). A “Signatory” to a treaty is a State that provided a preliminary endorsement of the instrument and its intent to examine the treaty domestically and consider ratifying it. “No action” means that a State did not express its consent.
Rationale	When a State ratifies one of the international human rights treaties, it assumes a legal obligation to implement the rights recognized in that treaty. Through ratification, States undertake to put in place domestic measures and legislation compatible with their treaty obligations. The State also commits to submitting regular reports on how the rights are being implemented to the monitoring committee set up under that treaty. Most of the committees can, under certain conditions, receive petitions from individuals who claim that their rights under the treaties have been violated. The State party must have recognized the competence of the committee to consider such complaints from individuals either by becoming a party to an optional protocol or by making a declaration to that effect under a specific article of the treaty. This indicator is a <i>structural indicator</i> in the OHCHR methodology for human rights indicators (HRI/MC/2008/3).
Method of computation	The indicator is computed as the status of ratification, “State party”, “Signatory”, and “No action”.
Data collection and source	The indicator is produced by OHCHR based on data obtained from and regularly updated by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, which has the mission to, inter alia, register and publish treaties, and to perform the depositary functions of the Secretary-General (http://untreaty.un.org/ola/).
Periodicity	The indicator is updated by OHCHR every six months or every after a new ratification.
Disaggregation	Not applicable.
Comments and limitations	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognizes civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In transforming the provisions of the Declaration into legally binding obligations, the United Nations adopted in 1966 the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United Nations adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial

Discrimination in 1965; the first Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1984; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aimed at the abolition of the death penalty, in 1989; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in 1990; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1999; the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2000; the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture in 2002; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2006; the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2008; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure in 2011.

A State that has signed a treaty has not expressed its consent to be bound by it. Signature is a means of authentication and expresses the willingness of the signatory State to continue the treaty-making process. The signature qualifies the signatory State to proceed to ratification, acceptance or approval. It also creates an obligation to refrain, in good faith, from acts that would defeat the object and the purpose of the treaty (see Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, 1969).

The indicator provides information on the acceptance by a State of international human rights standards and its intention or commitment to undertake steps to realize human rights in conformity with the provisions of the relevant instruments (*structural indicator*). It does not, however, capture actual implementation (*process indicator*) or its results (*outcome indicator*).

The indicator does not reflect possible “reservations” entered by a State on a treaty. States parties can enter “reservations” on a treaty. A reservation is a declaration made by a State by which it purports to exclude or alter the legal effect of certain provisions of the treaty in their application to that State. A reservation enables a State to accept a multilateral treaty as a whole by giving it the possibility not to apply certain provisions with which it does not want to comply. Reservations can be made when the treaty is signed, ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to. Although an “ideal” indicator on the status of international human rights treaties should include different weights for different reservations, establishing objective criteria to obtain a weighting scheme may be technically difficult. Reservations should not be

incompatible with the object and the purpose of the treaty (see Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties).

The Human Rights Council also adopted the human rights voluntary goals (**resolution 9/12**) to promote the realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One goal is the universal ratification of the core international human rights instruments and dedication of all efforts towards the realization of the international human rights obligations of States.