**37th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming**

***Theme: The promotion and protection of human rights in the light of   
the universal periodic review mechanism: challenges and opportunities***

*Concept note (as of 20 February 2018)*

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| **Date and venue:** | **Monday, 26 February 2018, 4 - 6 p.m., Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva** (will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>) |
| **Objective:** | The universal periodic review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 States Members of the United Nations. The UPR is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council, based on equal treatment for all countries.  International cooperation and the sharing of good practices are essential to States’ efforts to improve human rights situations in every country in line with the objectives of the UPR, through cooperative endeavours and the sharing of best practices among States and other stakeholders. By now, all 193 Member States have been reviewed twice by the UPR, and the third cycle is well underway. The 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UPR are important opportunities for the United Nations system to engage constructively with each Member State, suggesting lines of action in preparation for their next UPR cycle, four and a half years later. Implementation action and coordination mechanisms, led by the Government, with the active participation of line Ministries, other State entities, the national human rights institution and civil society organizations, can also benefit from the assistance of the United Nations agencies and programmes as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), regional organizations and bilateral donors. Unlocking the potential available within the United Nations system and the wider international community in order to assist Member States in advancing the promotion and protection of human rights, building also on South-South and North–South cooperation, can enhance the mainstreaming of human rights and efforts at the relevant United Nations bodies. The panel will explore how supporting at all levels the implementation of recommendations resulting from the UPR strengthens the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level, to achieve UPR objectives, as an important mechanism in contributing to the enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights. |
| **Chair:** | **H.E. Mr. Vojislav Šuc**, President of the Human Rights Council |
| **Opening statements:** | **H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák**, President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly  **Ms. Amina Mohammed**, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations *(video message)*  **Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **Moderator:** | **Ms. Kate Gilmore**, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **Panellists:** | **Mr. Achim Steiner**,Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme *(video message)* and **Mr. Robert Piper**, Special Adviser on United Nations Reforms, United Nations Development Programme  **Ms. Charlotte Petri Gornitzka**, Chair of the Development Assistance Committee, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  **H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**,Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador  **Ms. Mary Robinson**, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **Guiding questions:** | The debate will be guided by the following questions:   1. How can the UPR better support stronger coordination of implementation efforts at the national level under the leadership of the executive (for example, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice or Attorney-General’s Office), with the participation of State entities and other stakeholders, and lead to the setting up or strengthening of national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up (NMRFs) or implementation plans? 2. How can the UPR mechanism contribute to the international cooperation in the field of human rights and ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights by all persons without discrimination? 3. How can the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, working through the United Nations system, provide better support to Member States in connection with strengthening the national human rights protection system, supporting human rights implementation and follow-up action as well as efforts related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? 4. How can the donor community better leverage the UPR in order to support the efforts of Member States in follow-up to UPR accepted recommendations and how can South-South and North-South cooperation provide more consistent support in follow-up to UPR accepted recommendations? |
| **Outcomes:** | **Recognizing the importance of UPR recommendations**, which address critical gaps in implementation vis-à-vis the legal obligations entered into by Member States when they ratify treaties and the political commitments they make through previous cycles of the UPR. Equally, UPR recommendations can be an important entry point for cooperation with and action by Governments, the United Nations system as well as by the wider international community, including donors.  **Contributing to international cooperation** – the UPR process is an inclusive process and action-oriented mechanism involving all States on an equal footing to promote and protect human rights. Such an important mechanism shall help States share their best practices and to cooperate with each other to advance human rights while ensuring non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity.  **Strengthening national level coordination** – Practical experience shows the critical role played by coordination mechanisms for reporting and follow-up (NMRFs) which recognize the leading role of the Government (often the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice or Attorney-General’s Office, with other line ministries involved), various state entities (such as parliament and the judiciary), and national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations playing an oversight role on implementation. Benchmark of success is the achievement of concrete results at country level and changes in law and practices that enhance human rights protection, also through national action or implementation plans.  **Strengthening coordination at the United Nations level** – Through the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinators, UPR recommendations could be more systematically reflected in Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework documents and become part of the overall SDGs efforts. This could enhance both mainstreaming human rights and operationalizing that mainstreaming through added support in implementation provided to Member States through the planning and programming of individual United Nations Country Team members – fully within their mandate.  **Strengthening South-South, North-South cooperation and international donor coordination** – Aligning more development and human rights efforts in the context of South-South and North-South cooperation in countries that receive official development assistance, especially when the countries are ready to follow up to recommendations that were received and accepted during the UPR, ahead of their next review, four and a half years later. Enhancing the effectiveness of aid could also benefit from taking into account accepted UPR recommendations. |
| **Mandate:** | In paragraph 42 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, the Human Rights Council decided to hold an annual high-level panel discussion to interact with heads of governing bodies and secretariats of United Nations agencies and funds within their respective mandates on specific human rights themes, with the objective of promoting the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the United Nations system. Following consultations, the Council decided that the theme of the 2018 panel discussion would be “The promotion and protection of human rights in the light of the universal periodic review mechanism: challenges and opportunities”. |
| **Format:** | The duration of the panel discussion will be strictly limited to two hours. A maximum of one hour will be set aside for the podium, including opening statements, moderator comments, if any, panellist presentations, and their responses to questions and concluding remarks. Speaking time limits for the panellists and guests, if any, will be calculated based on the maximum one hour limit for the podium.  States and observers, including national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intervening from the floor will also have a maximum of one hour. Each speaker will have two minutes to raise issues and to ask panellists questions. The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the panel and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups will be moved to the beginning of the list.  The practice of having two slots for Member and observer States (2x12), NHRIs (2x1) and NGOs (2x2) will be maintained but the possibility for panellists to intervene in-between will depend entirely on the time used at the start of the panel.  Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). |
| **Background documents and information:** | * Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization ([A/72/1](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/72/1), paragraph 98); * Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity ([A/72/351](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/72/351)) * Summary of the panel discussion on promoting international cooperation to support national human rights follow-up systems and processes - Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ([A/HRC/34/24](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/24)) * Report of the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights ([A/HRC/34/74](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/34/74)) * Summary report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the panel discussion on the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review ([A/HRC/35/16](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/35/16)) * Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review ([A/HRC/35/18](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/35/18)) * Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the progress and the challenges encountered in the main activities aimed at enhancing technical cooperation and capacity-building undertaken since the establishment of the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/35/20](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/35/20)) * OHCHR web pages on the universal periodic review: [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx) |