



General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 June 2012

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Twentieth session

Agenda items 2 and 6

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Universal periodic review

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the operations of the Voluntary Fund for participation in the universal periodic review*

* Late submission.

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I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 16/22 and decision 17/119, in which the Council requested the secretariat to provide an annual written update on the operations of the Voluntary Fund for participation in the universal periodic review and resources available to it. The present report provides an overview of the activities funded, as well as contributions received and expenditures incurred, on the basis of the terms of reference of the Fund. As this is the first such report prepared by the secretariat, information is provided retroactively to the establishment of the Fund in 2008.

B. Establishment of the Fund

2. In its resolution 5/1, the Human Rights Council called for the establishment of a voluntary trust fund to facilitate the participation of developing countries, particularly least developed countries, in the universal periodic review mechanism. At its sixth session, the Council adopted resolution 6/17, in which it reiterated its request for the Secretary-General to establish, *inter alia*, such a fund and requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to take the necessary measures with a view to expeditiously operationalizing the mechanism, and urged all member States, observers and other stakeholders of the Council to support its operationalization.

3. Following the approval of its terms of reference, the Fund became operational as a voluntary trust fund administered by the Secretary-General through OHCHR. Given the nature of the Fund and the activities it was designed to support, it was deemed unnecessary to establish a board of trustees.

II. Mandate of the Fund

4. The Fund can receive voluntary contributions from States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations or private institutions and individuals. Financial assistance may be requested by developing countries, in particular least developed countries, that are States Members of the United Nations.

A. Travel to meetings

5. The Fund was established to provide financial support for, *inter alia*:

(a) The travel of official representatives of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, to Geneva to present the national report, take part in the ensuing interactive dialogue and be involved in the adoption of the report in the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review during which their country is considered;

(b) The travel of official representatives of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, that are members of the Human Rights Council and that do not have a permanent mission in Geneva, to act as rapporteurs (that is, a member of the “troika”).

6. During the first cycle, in response to the request of numerous member States, the activities of the Fund were expanded to include funding for the participation of developing

countries, in particular least developed countries, in the plenary session of the Human Rights Council during which the outcome of their review is adopted.

7. Under the terms of reference, the travel assistance is provided through a retroactive payment procedure. The reimbursement of travel expenses to attend the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and the sessions of the Human Rights Council is initiated upon request for financial assistance from the State concerned.

8. In accordance with established United Nations practice, arrangements were made for the Fund to cover one round-trip economy class ticket per delegation for a representative not residing in Geneva, as well as daily subsistence allowance (DSA) at the Geneva rate at the time of the meeting. Confirmation of approval is issued with an indication of the maximum ticket cost to be reimbursed. Applicable United Nations rules and procedures for official travel are followed and reimbursement is made only after completion of travel and upon receipt of a travel claim with supporting documentation. Reimbursement is made directly to the Government concerned, possibly through its permanent mission in either Geneva or New York.

B. Pre-session briefings to assist States in preparation for the review

9. During the first cycle, a number of briefings were organized prior to the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. Their objective was to inform Member States on how to prepare for their participation in the universal periodic review, including organizing a process of national consultation, drafting the national report and participating in the interactive dialogues in the Working Group and the Human Rights Council plenary. These briefings also focused on the policies and procedures of the Council and the Working Group as well as on the exchange of good practices and lessons learned.

10. The programme of these briefings consisted of plenary segments and break-out group discussions. During the plenary segments, the main provisions of Human Rights Council resolutions and decisions relating to the universal periodic review were presented. The break-out group segments allowed for more focused presentations and discussions on the main features of the universal periodic review process, such as the methodology for preparing the national report, including the consultation process, and the review process in the Working Group and in the Council plenary. The programmes were designed to ensure a balance between general presentations and specific segments, and keeping in consideration the fact that the universal periodic review is a holistic human rights process, as well as a cycle.

III. Financial situation of the Fund

11. Tables 1 and 2 show, respectively, the detailed financial situation of the Fund as at 31 December 2011 (statement of income and expenditure) and the status of contributions as at the same date.

12. Since its establishment, 13 countries have made financial contributions to the Fund. Table 2 provides an overview of all contributions received.

13. Most of the contributions come from a small group of countries. Given the universal nature of the mechanism, all Member States are encouraged to contribute within their means. From 2008 to 2011, the income used to fund activities included both the annual voluntary contributions and the unallocated amounts carried over from previous years. Since the Fund has not enjoyed a predictable pattern of income, substantial resources have been kept as a reserve for future activities. The absence of regular pledges by donors

accounts for the conservative disbursement pattern, which is intended, inter alia, to ensure that enough funding is available at all material times for travel of delegations requesting financial assistance.

Table 1. Statement of income and expenditure for the period 1 January 2008–31 December 2011

(United States dollars)

	2008–2009	2010–2011	Total 2008–2011
	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Income			
Voluntary contributions received from			
Governments ^a	1,492,975	898,849	2,391,824
Miscellaneous income	56,012	65,586	121,598
Total income	1,548,987	964,435	2,513,422
Expenditure			
Staff costs	0	0	0
Experts' and consultants' fees and travel	0	0	0
Travel of staff	46,818	102,100	148,918
Travel of representatives	126,214	256,680	382,894
Contractual services	5,100	34,451	39,551
General operating expenses	39,283	2,974	42,257
Supplies and materials	0	0	0
Grants, contributions and seminars	8,199	225,192	233,391
Programme support costs	29,330	80,782	110,112
Total expenditure	254,944	702,179	957,123
Net excess/(shortfall) of income over expenditures for the period	1,294,043	262,256	1,556,299
Opening balance	0	1,294,043	0
Miscellaneous adjustments/savings/refunds to donors	0	22,980	22,980
Total fund balance	1,294,043	1,579,279	1,579,279

^a The 2008–2009 contributions include contributions from Italy, Romania and the Russian Federation paid in 2007 but transferred to the Voluntary Fund in 2008 (US\$ 375,359).

Table 2. Voluntary Fund for participation in the universal periodic review voluntary contributions as at 31 December 2011

(United States dollars)

<i>Donor</i>	<i>2008–2009^a</i>	<i>2010–2011</i>	<i>Total</i> <i>2008–2011</i>
Austria	157,729		157,729
Colombia		26,668	26,668
Denmark		359,002	359,002
Germany	418,410	246,609	665,019
Hungary		6,570	6,570
Italy	422,852		422,852
Japan	200,000	200,000	400,000
Kuwait		50,000	50,000
Romania	73,746		73,746
Russian Federation	100,000		100,000
Saudi Arabia	25,000		25,000
Singapore		10,000	10,000
Switzerland	95,238		95,238
Total	1,492,975	898,849	2,391,824

^a The 2008–2009 contributions include contributions from Italy, Romania and the Russian Federation paid in 2007 but transferred to the Voluntary Fund in 2008 (US\$ 375,359).

IV. Activities

A. Travel to meetings

14. Since the establishment of the Fund, 67 States¹ have requested financial assistance for travel to the Working Group sessions during which they were reviewed. Of these, 30 were least developed countries. In addition, 10 States requested financial assistance to travel to the session of the Human Rights Council for the adoption of the outcome of their review. As the Fund only became operational starting from the second session of the Working Group, countries reviewed during the first session did not have the possibility to request assistance.

¹ A total of 67 Member States have received support from the Voluntary Fund during the first cycle of the universal periodic review: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nicaragua, Niger, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu and Yemen.

15. The figure below and table 3 provide a breakdown of the financial assistance for the travel of Government delegates to Geneva by region and an overview of annual expenditures, complete with the amount authorized and the status of reimbursement, as well as total commitments to 31 December 2011. Only 26 out of 67 requests have been fully settled, with the remaining claims not yet closed because the recipient countries have not submitted the necessary documentation.

Requests for assistance per region

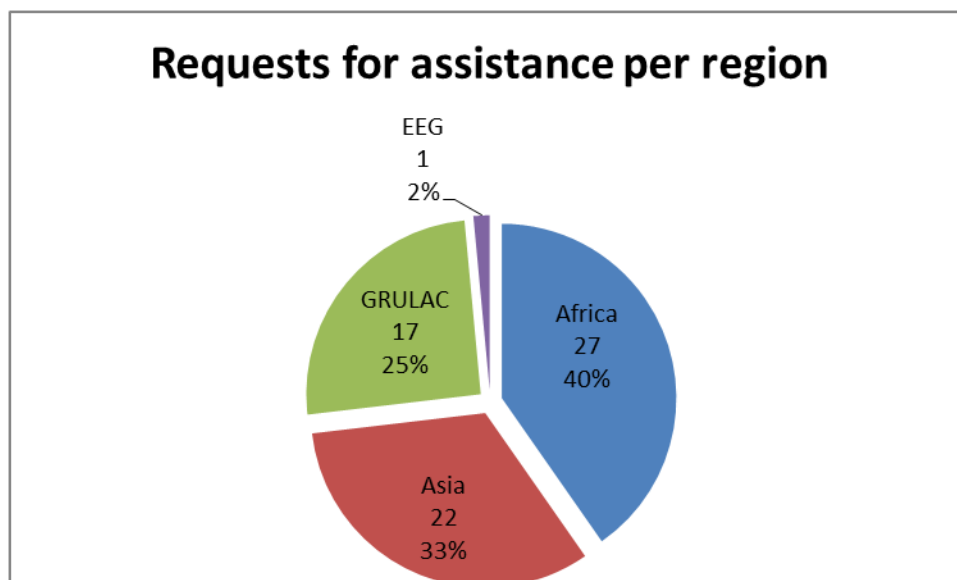


Table 3. Expenditures for travel of Government representatives to sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and the Human Rights Council plenary

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of countries supported</i>	<i>Amount authorized/ pending claim (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Amount paid (United States dollars)</i>
2008	6	13,280	16,885
2009	17	33,846	23,568
2010	23	46,365	39,942
2011	21	81,778	11,698
Total	67	175,269	92,093
Grand total			267,362

16. To date, all States elected to the Human Rights Council have a permanent mission in Geneva. Consequently, there have been no requests for financial assistance to participate in a session as a rapporteur.

B. Training activities

17. A total of 23 briefings to assist countries in preparing for the universal periodic review have been organized by OHCHR and financed from the Fund (see annex). To date, a total of 106 countries have participated in these briefings, seminars and workshops. Due to

the fact that the first two sessions of the Working Group were held shortly after the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, the countries reviewed at those sessions did not have the possibility to participate in training activities before their review. Many of them, however, participated in later seminars and briefings as resource countries.

18. In most cases these briefings were initiated by the secretariat and brought together both developing and developed countries; only the participation of the former was covered by the Fund in the form of reimbursement of travel expenses and DSA.

19. A few briefings were initiated at the request of States, other United Nations entities or intergovernmental organizations, such as the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Council of Europe. The initiating entity produced a detailed description of the proposed training course, information on training arrangements, including location, facilities, logistical aspects, number and position of trainees, and an itemized statement of estimated cost. The venue for the briefings was determined based on proximity for intended participants and the availability of facilities.

20. Of the 23 briefings, 17 were held at the regional level, while the others were held at the national, subregional and interregional levels. During the first cycle, four national briefings were organized at the request of the countries concerned and, in the case of Somalia, following the Human Rights Council's call for assistance to facilitate the country's participation in the universal periodic review

21. The briefings drew extensively on the experience of States that had already undergone the review, as well as on the expertise of OHCHR regional offices, the secretariat and other intergovernmental or regional organizations. They were a forum for the exchange of information, and were aimed at helping States to organize a broad and participatory process of national consultation, to prepare a comprehensive and balanced national report and to become acquainted with the rules of procedure of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and the plenary session of the Human Rights Council.

22. The need to ensure a balance between the participation of a critical mass of States—to ensure effective information and experience sharing—and the timeliness of the briefing for all participants, ideally six to nine months prior to the review, was possibly the main challenge of holding regional briefings, as not all countries were reviewed at the same session or even in the same calendar year. Countries were clearly at different stages of preparation, with some of those scheduled for review two or more years later not having even constituted the national teams yet. It is for this reason primarily that the secretariat proposed shifting to an interregional format, with all countries scheduled for review at the same session being briefed together. Such an approach is also aimed at promoting the exchange of information and best practices among countries from different geographical regions. Three such interregional briefings, for States scheduled for review during the first three sessions of the second universal periodic review cycle, were held in Madrid, Bangkok and Tunis at the end of 2011.

V. Conclusions

23. Throughout the first universal periodic review cycle, the Voluntary Fund for participation in the universal periodic review has been used to finance the participation of requesting Member States in the relevant sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. Assistance was also provided for Member States that do not have representation in Geneva, in order to enable them to participate in the adoption of their outcome document in the Human Rights Council

plenary. The Fund has also been used to organize and fund the participation of officials in field-based preparatory briefings for the universal periodic review.

24. Although the parameters for financing the participation of developing country Member States in the universal periodic review sessions are consistent with established practice for the General Assembly, the post facto reimbursement procedure has proven unsatisfactory, as the recipient Member States have experienced difficulties in submitting the required documentation to enable the settlement of the claims. The secretariat is therefore proposing a revision of the terms of reference for the Fund to make it possible for tickets to be provided in advance of the sessions. Upon approval of the proposed modifications, a detailed note with the revised modalities will be circulated to all delegations.

25. During the review of the work and functioning of the Human Rights Council, Member States again requested that the Fund be strengthened and operationalized in order to encourage the significant participation of developing countries, particularly least developing countries; they also requested that special attention be given to small island developing States (Council resolution 16/21, para. 14). Accordingly, the secretariat is proposing that that the revision of the terms of reference of the Fund provide for a more substantial travel assistance for least developing countries and small island developing States.

26. As regards the pre-session briefings organized by the secretariat, it is planned to further pursue the recently initiated shift to interregional briefings. Moreover, it is proposed that national human rights institutions consistent with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) be more systematically associated with these briefings.

Annex

Overview of expenditures for individual training activities by year

2011

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Counties invited</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Briefing for Somalia	15–17 February 2011	National	Djibouti, Djibouti	Somalia, Djibouti and Italy	25
Briefing for countries reviewed in the first, second and third sessions of the universal periodic review	6–7 September 2011	Interregional	Bangkok, Thailand	Bahrain, Ecuador, Indonesia, Japan, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Serbia and Thailand	92
Briefing for countries reviewed in the first, second and third sessions of the universal periodic review	6–7 September 2011	Interregional	Madrid, Spain	Argentina, Brazil, Czech Republic, Finland, Guatemala, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, United Arab Emirates and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	36
Briefing for countries reviewed in the first and second sessions of the universal periodic review (Organized jointly with OIF)	31 October–3 November 2011	Interregional	Gammarth, Tunis, Tunisia	Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Comoros, France, Haiti, Luxembourg, Mali, Morocco, Poland, Senegal, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia and Ukraine	48

2010

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Countries invited</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Briefing for South-East Asian countries	10–11 May 2010	Regional	Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar	Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam, Thailand and Indonesia	44
Briefing for Tajikistan	25–26 May 2010	Regional	Dushanbe, Tajikistan	Tajikistan and Russian Federation	57
Briefing for West African countries	6–7 July 2010	Regional	Dakar, Senegal	Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Togo, Liberia, Mauritania, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Senegal and Switzerland	73
Briefing for Latin American countries	30–31 August 2010	Regional	Panama City, Panama	Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Colombia and Mexico	21
Briefing for European countries	6–7 September 2010	Regional	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Estonia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Ireland, Iceland, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, United Kingdom and Slovenia	39
Briefing for Pacific countries	9–10 September 2010	Regional	Suva, Fiji	Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Fiji, Tuvalu and Kiribati	22
Briefing for Caribbean countries	14–15 September 2010	Regional	St. George's, Grenada	Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Barbados and Mauritius	31
Briefing for Southern African countries	27–28 September 2010	Regional	Johannesburg, South Africa	Swaziland, Mozambique, Namibia, Malawi, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Djibouti	60

2009

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Countries invited</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Briefing for the Dominican Republic	19–20 February 2009	National	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic	Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Peru	25
Briefing for Latin American countries	26–27 February 2009	Regional	Panama City, Panama	Uruguay, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Guatemala and Peru	33
Briefing for Central Asian countries	27–28 April 2009	Regional	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Germany and Russian Federation	32
Briefing for francophone African countries	20–21 May 2009	Regional	Dakar, Senegal	Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Mauritania, Senegal, Angola, Burkina Faso and Madagascar	24
Briefing for anglophone African countries	23–24 June 2009	Regional	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Djibouti, Ghana and United Kingdom	23
Briefing for Arab countries	6–7 July 2009	Regional	Beirut, Lebanon	Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Yemen, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Germany	40
Briefing for the Democratic Republic of the Congo	22–23 July 2009	National	Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo	Democratic Republic of the Congo	44
Briefing for European countries	22–23 October 2009	Regional	Brussels, Belgium	Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United States of America, Switzerland and United Kingdom	46

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Countries invited</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Briefing for South-East Asian countries	16–17 November 2009	Regional	Bangkok, Thailand	Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam, Indonesia and Malaysia	50

2008

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Countries invited</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
Briefing for the English-speaking Caribbean countries	6–7 October 2008	Regional	Bridgetown, Barbados	Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, Guyana, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, Zambia, Tonga, India, New Zealand	47
Briefing for Asian countries	20–21 November 2008	Regional	Bangkok, Thailand	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Philippines, Viet Nam	24