



PALAIS DES NATIONS – 1211, GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

17 July 2023

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the fourth cycle review of Poland by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group at its 41st session in November 2022. The constructive engagement between your Government, my Office, and the UPR mechanism is warmly welcome. As the final outcome report on the review of Poland was recently adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 52nd session, I have also taken note of the efforts of your Government to implement specific recommendations since the previous review.

A matrix of thematically clustered recommendations, starting with those supported by your Government, is available at OHCHR's website (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/pl-index>), and should be considered as part of this letter. The matrix indicates the recommending State and links each recommendation to relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In annex, I have also attached my Office's observations in light of the outcome of the fourth cycle of the UPR. In line with previous practice, I will be sending similar observations to all Member States once their fourth cycle UPR outcome is adopted by the Human Rights Council, with a view to follow-up action in close cooperation with national entities and other stakeholders.

I take this opportunity to draw your attention to the support available through the Voluntary Fund for UPR Implementation, which may be activated at the request and with the consent of a concerned State, along with tools such as the "[UPR practical guidance](#)" and the "[UN good practices](#)" repository on how the UPR process supports sustainable development, with a view to facilitating efforts to implement UPR recommendations in line with the SDGs.

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'V' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Volker Türk

His Excellency
Mr. Zbigniew Rau
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland



Observations in light of the outcome of the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review

The exemplary humanitarian response of Poland to refugees who have crossed the Ukraine-Poland border since the beginning of the war in Ukraine is welcome, including the adoption of the Act of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict in the Territory of that State. The adoption of social policies to increase the quality of life of people in Poland is also welcome, including through improved access to social and health services and support to groups at risk of poverty and exclusion, as well prioritization of measures for families to have decent lives, and to protect children and persons with disabilities.

Harassment and persecution of human rights defenders working on sexual and reproductive health and rights by both State and non-State actors opposing the provision of safe and legal abortion services are concerning. A number of activists are reportedly being investigated or prosecuted either for participating in protests against abortion restrictions, or for providing abortion-related information.

The situation of LGBTIQ+ people in Poland has worsened significantly since the last review. Of particular concern was a governmental electoral campaign targeting LGBTIQ+ people, which has reportedly led to an increase of smear attacks, harassment, profiling, and policing of human rights defenders advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights. In addition, same-sex unions are not recognized in Poland, and the country does not extend protections to same-sex couples and their children on an equal basis with others. Lack of progress in combatting discrimination and hate speech against LGBTIQ+ people remain concerning, and steps are urged to ensure the process for legal recognition of gender identity is aligned with international human rights standards. The Government is also urged to take measures to ensure that LGBTIQ+ people are able to exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly without fear of reprisals, that all demonstrations enjoy equal access to public spaces, and that all individuals are equally protected by the police.

Poland is encouraged to continue the practice of developing an implementation plan in follow up to the UPR outcome, in close consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders, in particular the parliament, the judiciary, the national human rights institution, local and regional governments, and civil society organizations. The matrix may be of use in the development of such an implementation plan. The Government is encouraged to explicitly link each UPR recommendation to corresponding recommendations of other international or regional human rights mechanisms and to the relevant SDG and its targets. This will, in turn, facilitate the creation of synergies between UPR implementation and SDG related actions and reporting within the context of the Voluntary National Review (VNR).

The Government is further encouraged to strengthen the national mechanism for reporting and follow-up, with the aim of ensuring a coordinated and effective approach



to reporting to international human rights mechanisms, and to implementing the recommendations, in line with the guidance provided by OHCHR following regional consultations and the High Commissioner's report to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/50/64](#)).

Further, an important measure that can positively contribute to follow-up action is voluntary mid-term UPR reporting. All Member States are encouraged to submit a voluntary mid-term UPR report some two years after the adoption of the UPR outcome. In this regard, the Government of Poland is encouraged to continue with the practice of submitting a mid-term report on follow-up to the fourth cycle UPR recommendations by 2025, detailing both implementation efforts as well as challenges to implementation, including the possible need for technical or capacity-building assistance.

OHCHR
17 July 2023