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## Preface

The Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council enjoys the full support of the Commonwealth. Designed to ensure equal treatment for every country, it allows countries to show how they are fulfilling their human rights obligations.

The UPR is not just about being reviewed by the Human Rights Council in Geneva. It is about progressing, promoting and protecting human rights on the ground. It is at the follow-up stage – the actual implementation of the recommendations accepted by the states – that it brings about meaningful change.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Human Rights Unit has organised a series of seminars for all Commonwealth member states reporting under the UPR process. These seminars are true to the three-way spirit of partnership in the UPR, in which governments, national human rights institutions or ombudsman's offices and civil society organisations all participate together. This approach has been a vehicle for important cross-country conversation, as well as detailed learning and sharing.

The Commonwealth will continue to support the UPR. This type of assistance is instrumental in advancing human rights – one of the fundamental values of the Commonwealth.

I warmly commend this publication.

**Kamalesh Sharma**

Commonwealth Secretary-General  
*London, June 2009*



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## Foreword

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) welcomes its co-operation with the Commonwealth Secretariat and its Human Rights Unit, which is fully engaged in sharing experiences and assisting the Commonwealth's 53 member states on human rights issues and in raising awareness of international human rights standards, mechanisms and procedures, and of recent developments in this field.

A new challenge emerged with the establishment of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and the creation of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR uniquely provides for a review of human rights in all 192 UN member states over a four year period (2008–2011). With the adoption of the four-year timetable member states agreed to the order of the review. While the UPR was an unfamiliar process, it has been established that it is a co-operative mechanism that reviews, on an equal basis, the promotion and protection of human rights in all UN member states. Despite the novelty of the UPR procedure, concerned member states have all appeared before the HRC's UPR working group for review and before its plenary for the adoption of the outcome of that review.

This publication represents an additional contribution to improving understanding and knowledge of the UPR. Contributors have been selected from the different stakeholders in the UPR process, including representatives of states, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society. Their practical experiences and their different perspectives on the UPR will help to explain its significance both as a mechanism and process: from the preparation of reports to the review in Geneva and the implementation of the recommendations made to states and their commitments to follow them up. In reality, the UPR is increasingly being perceived as an evolving process. We have much to learn from the examples shared in this publication about the opportunities for the various stakeholders to work with states on follow-up.

We should not forget that the UPR is just one year old and that two-thirds of UN member states are still to be reviewed under the first round. This publication can play a useful role in the continuous appraisal and evaluation of the effectiveness of the UPR, as a formal assessment of the mechanism will take place in the Human Rights Council in 2011, before the second round of the UPR process.

### **Giuliano Comba**

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