

---

# How the UPR Works for National Human Rights Institutions\*

In 2008, the UPR process was new and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) felt that there was a lack of clarity and understanding on how to approach this unfamiliar mechanism. On receiving the UPR guidelines and documents from the Human Rights Council, the CHRAJ approached the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Department for joint collaboration in the UPR process. The call (from the CHRAJ and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI),<sup>3</sup> a civil society organisation) for state departments to afford broad consultation with NHRIs and CSOs received no response, as there was ambiguity about the deadlines for submission of the UPR reports.

As the stakeholders' groups (namely NHRIs and CSOs) had relatively shorter time-scales for transmitting their submissions to the HRC, the CHRAJ prepared a concise report which was sent to the Ministry of Justice for its comments before submission to the OHCHR.

As the deadline for the national state report for the UPR process approached, the Ministry of Justice called for broad consultation. An inter-ministerial committee, including the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Women and Children, Manpower, Youth and Employment, Education, Science and Sports, and Finance and Economic Planning, was called to participate in and contribute towards preparing the report. The government asked the CHRAJ, as well as officials from the police and prison departments, the Ghana Bar Association, the Journalists Association and CSOs, to provide input and assist in the preparation of the report. A number of formal and informal consultations and review workshops were organised to identify key human rights issues, concerns, achievements and challenges. The Ministry of Justice conflated the different contributions and was responsible for drafting, finalising and submitting the report to OHCHR.

The Ghana mission in Geneva was instrumental in providing essential updates and insights into the UPR working group sessions in Geneva. The mission provided useful pointers on many issues, including the size, composition and level of delegations, the presentation of the report by the state under review and how to address the questions raised during the interactive dialogue.

---

\*From the perspective of Ghana's NHRI.

Contributed by Anna Bossman, Acting Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice.

---

The review of Ghana in Geneva included a presentation by the Minister of Justice and the Minister of State for Education. Forty-four countries participated in the interactive dialogue by raising questions and seeking clarifications. Out of the 30 recommendations made, Ghana accepted 22 and rejected six. Some of the recommendations focused on ratification of international human rights treaties, addressing discrimination against women and children, strengthening the capacities of the CHRAJ through increasing funding and resources, and adopting necessary measures including awareness-raising campaigns against harmful traditional practices and stereotypes.

**... a high level of collaboration and co-operation with government is essential to produce an effective report.**

The CHRAJ is keen to advance and strengthen the UPR process. One of its strategies is to include the recommendations and commitments accepted by the Government into its annual report on human rights in Ghana. Other strategies the CHRAJ will adopt to strengthen the UPR's potential to promote and protect human rights in Ghana are to share information on the UPR process with the NGO forum that is convened on a quarterly basis, to intensify campaigns calling for ratification of various international treaties and to promote human rights legislation.

In the experience of the CHRAJ, a high level of collaboration and co-operation with government is essential to produce an effective report. In addition, information sharing and collaboration with the CSOs and the NHRI is essential to ensure a good understanding of the UPR process. Communication with the mission in Geneva should be used as a helpful resource to keep abreast with the trends at the HRC.

From an NHRI's perspective, the positive aspects of the UPR process are in the opportunities to engage with government before and after the review in Geneva. This involves encouraging national implementation of the commitments made and assisting with the follow-up before the next round of the UPR in four years time.