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# What Civil Society Organisations Can Do to Get the Most from the UPR\*

## Introduction

All relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations, can and should contribute to the UPR in various ways and at all phases of the process.<sup>10</sup>

Civil society organisations should engage with the UPR because the process represents a unique opportunity to strengthen dialogue and co-operation between the state, NHRIs and CSOs, as well as among CSOs, concerning the implementation of human rights at national level.

The UPR provides for the participation of ‘all relevant stakeholders’.<sup>11</sup> Currently, participation of CSOs from remote global areas, as well as CSOs representing marginalised groups, is low. However the UPR process is still new and unfamiliar to many, so this proportion can be expected to increase. In addition to CSOs, greater participation by the media, parliamentarians and academics can usefully support and complement the contribution of CSOs to the UPR.

## During the preparation phase of the UPR

In the run-up to the actual review in Geneva, CSOs may engage in the UPR by submitting a report to the HRC and also by participating in the country’s own national consultative process.

To prepare and collect information for submission to the UPR, CSOs can usefully organise regional and national information sessions and workshops to increase awareness of the UPR and to encourage and co-ordinate coalitions around priority issues. CSOs are also encouraged to seek consultation and co-ordination with the NHRI where one exists.

Regarding the content of a CSO’s report, organisations are encouraged to remember that the UPR process upholds the principles of co-operation and non-confrontation. Best practice in this regard includes proposing constructive solutions (specific measures, policies, laws, etc.) for each of the challenges raised in the submission. CSOs are also encouraged to adhere strictly to the guidelines developed by the OHCHR.<sup>12</sup>

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Furthermore, CSOs can participate in the national consultations that will be conducted by the state under review when preparing their national report. CSOs can also open a dialogue with the SuR on the information they are preparing for their submission.

**The UPR provides for the participation of 'all relevant stakeholders'.**

### **During the review**

CSOs can contribute further to the dissemination of relevant information to the representatives of countries who will participate in the interactive dialogue. Useful practices include suggesting questions and recommendations to be addressed to the SuR in line with the contents of the three reports that serve as the basis of the review.

CSOs can attend the interactive dialogue in Geneva. If this is not a viable option, CSOs can instead organise meetings with relevant stakeholders at national level to watch it live through the webcast and discuss immediate follow-up prior to the adoption of the outcome of the UPR.

CSOs can intervene in the plenary meeting of the HRC dedicated to the adoption of the outcome of the UPR. They can usefully co-ordinate among themselves, as well as with the NHRI where one exists, to make the best use of the 20 minutes allocated overall to their interventions.

### **During the follow-up**

Emerging CSO practices with regard to the follow-up of the UPR include:

- (a) Participation in the debate under the new item 6 on the agenda of the regular sessions of the HRC dedicated to the UPR;
- (b) Participation in the establishment of a timetable and of systematic follow-up mechanisms for the outcome of the UPR at the national level.

### **The role of international non-governmental organisations**

In addition to making their own contribution, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) can provide support, particularly in developing countries, by sharing knowledge with and building the capacity of relevant stakeholders to enable them to participate meaningfully in the UPR.

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## **Conclusion**

By engaging in the UPR, CSOs can help identify and overcome challenges and promote best practices that impact on the credibility and effectiveness of the UPR mechanism.

Through their meaningful participation in the UPR, CSOs, together with states and NHRIs, can contribute to making the UPR a genuine opportunity for the achievement of measurable results in the improvement of the realisation of human rights on the ground.