

# Engaging with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

## What is the UPR?

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is an intergovernmental process of the Human Rights Council where each of the 193 UN Member States are reviewed on their entire human rights record every four and a half years. During the peer-review process, UN Member States give recommendations on how the state under review could improve human rights in their own country. Canada will be reviewed for the fourth time in 2023.

*Since its inception in 2006, over 90,000 recommendations have been made to UN member states.*

## Reviews are based on compliance with international human rights frameworks, including:

- ◆ The Charter of the United Nations (UN Charter)
- ◆ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- ◆ The human rights treaties and conventions to which a country has ratified
- ◆ Applicable international humanitarian law
- ◆ Voluntary pledges and commitments

## What makes the UPR unique?

- ◆ The only mechanism of its kind
- ◆ Enjoys universal participation from member states
- ◆ Civil society has a clearly defined role in the process
- ◆ Functions in a transparent and predictable way
- ◆ Provides concrete suggestions to states on fulfilling their human rights obligations
- ◆ Can help shape global norms and standards, strengthen social movements, bring attention to stigmatized issues, and hold states accountable

## What kinds of human rights issues are addressed in the UPR?

- ◆ Ratification of international and regional human rights treaties
- ◆ Abolition of the death penalty
- ◆ Liberalisation of restrictive abortion laws
- ◆ Decriminalization of same-sex relations
- ◆ Equitable access to health and education services for persons with disabilities
- ◆ Accountability for state violence
- ◆ Increased transparency and dialogue between government and civil society
- ◆ [And much more!](#)

## How can civil society engage?

Civil society organizations and advocates can submit evidence of human rights violations and recommendations for solutions through stakeholder reports for consideration during the review. You do not need special status (ECOSOC) or previous experience with UN mechanisms to submit a report. You can share your report directly with UN Member States to encourage them to make recommendations on the issues you have identified, participate in national consultations, promote your report with the media, watch the review online, and make a statement to the Human Rights Council when the final report of a country's review is adopted. Civil society also plays an important role in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations and ensuring accountability.

## Tools and resources

- ◆ [Sexual Rights Initiative UPR Toolkit for Advocates](#)
- ◆ [Sexual Rights Initiative UPR Database](#)
- ◆ [About the UPR \(OHCHR\)](#)
- ◆ [UPR-Info](#)
- ◆ [OHCHR Human Rights Indicators](#)
- ◆ [UPR Tips for NHRIs and NGOs](#)
- ◆ [Universal Human Rights Index](#)
- ◆ [A Practical Guide for Civil Society - UPR](#)

## What are some impacts of engaging in the UPR?



Strengthened civil society relationships and solidarity



Getting your issues on your government's agenda



Directing international attention to national issues



Honing your advocacy skills and understanding of the UN



Building visibility for your issues and organization

# Overview of the UPR cycle



## 1. PREPARATION PHASE

**1a:** Civil society submits information to OHCHR (5-7 months before review)

**1b:** State under review submits report

**1c:** State report along with OHCHR compilation of “UN information” and summary of stakeholder submissions released (approx. 6 weeks prior to review)

**1d:** Member and observer states may submit questions for the state under review to relevant troika. Troika compiles questions and submits to state under review (approx. 2 weeks prior to review)

**1e:** Member and observer states prepare additional questions, recommendations to raise during the review

## 2. REVIEW PHASE

**2a:** Formulation of draft report (i.e. outcome document) by troika, including summary of discussion during the review, recommendations made to the state (and whether state supports each), and voluntary commitments by state

**2b:** Adoption of report by WG on UPR (approx. 2-4 days after oral review)

**2c:** Potential dialogue with state, after WG process and before adoption of report by HRC plenary on further voluntary commitments and agreement ro recommendations

## 3. OUTCOME REPORT ADOPTION PHASE

**3a:** Statements by stakeholders on the outcome document -either orally in HRC plenary during adoption or written statements submitted in advance of session

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

**4a:** Consultation with civil society on implementation and possible collaboration (potential development of national action plan to implement outcome)

**4b:** Monitoring by civil society of implementation of recommendation

Image credit: Sexual Rights & The Universal Periodic Review: A Toolkit for Advocates, Sexual Rights Initiative and International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2012.