

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 56th SESSION

Annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation and capacity-building

Enhancing coordination for technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights to implement universal periodic review recommendations

09 July 2024

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Mahamane Cissé-Gouro, Director, Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division**, stressed that the objective of the panel is to share activities, good practices, challenges, and lessons learned of coordination among States, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations agencies, funds and programs and other relevant stakeholders to support States' efforts to implement UPR recommendations.

Since its inception, the UPR has evolved and matured into a robust mechanism working in complementarity with other United Nations human rights mechanisms, as increasingly highlighted during reviews and documented good practices. The interconnectedness emphasizes the UPR's role as a pivotal component of the global human rights ecosystem.

Recommendations become meaningful when they translate into tangible actions and improvements on the ground, providing States with a framework that is accessible, responsive, tailored, and reinforcing SDG implementation. Effective implementation of UPR recommendations also relies on strong international cooperation to deliver relevant technical assistance and capacity-building. In recent years, the demand for such assistance has increased.

In this context, once established, the online repository of technical cooperation and capacity-building activities for the implementation of UPR recommendations will present a tremendous opportunity to showcase how human rights mechanisms can advance human rights, mapping expertise and facilitating collaboration and partnerships.

The first panelist, **H.E. Mr. Tormod C. Endresen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva**, affirmed that technical cooperation and capacity-building are a cornerstone of the work of the Human Rights Council, alongside the mandate to address serious violations and abuses. By engaging in capacity-building individuals and communities are empowered to claim their rights, and States to protect and promote the dignity of every person. Through technical cooperation, human rights are protected under the rule of law. These elements are essential to improving the daily lives of people and to ensure sustainable development that leaves no one behind. Effective technical cooperation and capacity-building are also key to preventing discrimination, marginalization, and conflict.

He underscored how **human rights are closely linked with the other two pillars of the UN**, and how the three of them are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. While human rights are individual, they serve the whole of society. And they are vital problem-solving tools that safeguard lives and livelihoods. By investing in human rights, the international community builds **just, peaceful, and stable societies**.

He further reiterated that **cooperation is at the heart of the Universal Periodic Review**. It is a unique platform for peer-to-peer dialogue among states and has often been referred to as the diamond of the UN human rights system. In this process, the engagement with other states that the UPR offers is particularly valuable, both here at the Council, and also in the bilateral engagement. He stressed that **civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and national human rights institutions**, among others, are key; they are indispensable for identifying the most pressing human rights issues, and for assuring meaningful implementation that leads to tangible improvements for rights-holders on the ground.

In his conclusive remarks, he focused on the voluntary fund issue. He encouraged countries to contribute to the voluntary fund within their ability.

Ms Adriana Quinones, Head, Human Rights and Development, UN Women Geneva Office, shared the UN Women's commitment to coordination, capacity-building, and technical cooperation in the field of human rights, gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls. The UPR is a unique tool to promote women's human rights and gender equality, exchange good practices and lessons learned, build constructive dialogue, and advance in implementing recommendations and policies with a human rights-based approach. She affirmed that **UN Women is active in supporting national processes related to the UPR** by supporting governments to prepare their national report; encouraging participation of civil society and other relevant actors in dialogues for the preparation of the State report; advocating with recommending States to submit advance questions and prepare recommendations on women's human rights and gender equality issues; and advocating for the acceptance of recommendations. UN Women engages with the UPR to strengthen a gender perspective, including supporting countries in reporting and preparing for the UPR.

She further shared several examples of the UN Women's work in Liberia, Tanzania, Brazil, Ukraine, and Colombia.

In conclusion, she encouraged to increase women's meaningful participation in the process and at all levels of decision-making.

Ms Mona M'Bikay, Executive Director of UPR info, reported that the fourth cycle processes showed an increase in terms of the number of recommendations addressed to States and of the participation of civil society organizations, National Human Rights Institutions, United Nations Country Teams, and regional organizations.

Then, she proposed **three factors** to help states better respect, protect, and fulfill human rights: sustainable financing, capacity-building, knowledge sharing and partnership, and dialogue and cooperation. These factors are critical and crucial in implementing UPR recommendations.

She concluded the presentation, by saying that the UPR has the potential to prevent and respond to human rights violations, build inclusive societies based on the rule of law, and strengthen national human rights protection systems. This mechanism fosters the participation of civil society, enabling states to make informed decisions by adopting a human rights-based approach to policy development. It reinforces democratic institutions, addresses the multidimensional aspects of human development, and promotes transparency and accountability.

In her conclusive remarks, she affirmed the issue of funding is not the only one. The political will is another. Member States should recognize the important role played by civil society, in monitoring the implementation of human rights commitments made by the states and in changing behavior and practices. They have access to the grassroots community. Then, she stated the need for an integrated approach, ensuring that the technical assistance is tailor-made.

To continue building the capacity of the local organization on the ground and to ensure sustainable human development, it is important to strengthen national actors and enhance and build a capacity to engage also with the three branches of the government. Also important is to foster dialogue and cooperation and cultivate a culture of dialogue and cooperation between states on the review and recommending state as well as among national actors. This collaboration is vital for exploring solutions and creating a more inclusive society that respects human rights for all.

Interactive dialogue

29 delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. All States agreed on the immense value of the UPR mechanism. The inclusion of UPR recommendations, in sustainable development cooperation frameworks, is welcome. UPR recommendations can give visibility to human rights challenges which can in turn lead to the adoption of legislation. The exchange of best practices and know-how is a better way to cooperate, added **Qatar**, bearing in mind the national specificities and context of each country. It will help countries to bring the progress sought in the promotion and protection of human rights, considered **Norway**. **It** stressed that the UPR is a cornerstone of the Human Rights Council's work. Technical cooperation and capacity building to support states in effectively implementing recommendations improving their human rights practices and fulfilling their international obligations. **The EU** reported its effort in working closely with UN partners to help deliver positive development and human rights outcomes in third countries.

Recognizing the critical role of technical cooperation and capacity building in developing countries, in particular, small island developing states, **Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, along with Jamaica** welcomed this useful exchange on how such support could be further enhanced to facilitate the implementation of UPR recommendations. They stressed the *value of the voluntary UPR implementation fund* which has provided crucial support to several CARICOM Member States, and LDC's SIDS in taking targeted action at the national level. These states face many challenges with capacity constraints to fully participate in the UPR and other human rights processes. Similarly, **Australia** acknowledged the important role of the voluntary fund for participation in the UPR and the voluntary fund for financial and technical assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review. Along with national mechanisms for implementation reporting and follow-up, these funds fill a vital gap in supporting states to implement recommendations from the UPR process.

While considering the UPR an important platform for countries to have equal and frank exchanges constructive dialogue and cooperation and technical assistance capacity-building a tool to implement recommendations and promote human rights, **China** affirmed that this should respect the will of the countries concerned and the premise of its consent to promote cooperation through consultations based on its needs and national conditions. The cooperation should be people-centered and all human rights should be promoted in a balanced manner.

NGOs, during the interactive dialogue, recognized the commitments and efforts of Member States to the UPR process and affirmed that much is still needed to ensure the effective implementation of recommendations for the advancement of human rights at the local level. National civil society as well as local and regional governments have a key role in bringing the decision-making process closer to the citizens and ensuring that laws, policies, and programs fully integrate rights holders' concerns. Widespread dissemination of recommendations locally is still lacking. The **CCIG** added that to enhance the effective implementation of human rights, States need to adopt a holistic approach that ensures respect, protection, and fulfillment of these rights for all, leaving no one behind. This involves, promoting human rights education, fostering a human rights-based economy, and ensuring access to justice, redress, and remedies. While **the Center for Global Nonkilling** focused on the ratification of the Genocide Convention, the **Human Rights Information and Training Center** focused on grave human rights violations across the world, particularly in the Middle East.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (29 country delegations):

Denmark (on behalf of a group of countries: Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Morocco, Denmark), Egypt (on behalf of Group of Arab States), European Union, Iceland (on behalf of Nordic-Baltic Countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden), Qatar (on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Gambia (on behalf of African Group), Trinidad and Tobago (on behalf of CARICOM), Antigua and Barbuda (on behalf of Beneficiary countries of the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund: Angola, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guyana, Maldives, Mali, Somalia, Suriname, Vanuatu), LAO PDR (on behalf of the ASEAN), Switzerland (on behalf of Austria, Slovenia, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland), Gambia (on behalf of Capo Verde, China, Lesotho, South Sudan), Luxembourg, Japan, Australia, India, Cuba, Eritrea, Thailand, Cambodia, Armenia, Maldives, Timor-Leste, Jamaica, Paraguay, Libya, Malawi, LAO PDR, Angola, China.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (8):

Al-Basher Foundation for Development, Center for Global Nonkilling, Centre catholique international de Genève (CCIG), Health and Environment Program (HEP), Human Rights Information and Training Center, International Catholic Child Bureau, Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan, Shaanxi Patriotic Volunteer Association.

To watch the full meeting refer to the [UN WEB TV](#).