

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

Frequently Asked Questions about the Universal Periodic Review



UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

What is the Universal Periodic Review?

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process that involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. The UPR is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council based on equal treatment for all countries. It provides an opportunity for all States to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. The UPR also includes a sharing of best human rights practices around the globe.

How was the UPR established?

The UPR was established when the Human Rights Council was created on 15 March 2006 by the UN General Assembly in resolution 60/251. This mandated the Council to "undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States". On 18 June 2007, one year after its first meeting, members of the new Council agreed to its institution-building package (A/HRC/RES/5/1) providing a road map guiding the future work of the Council. One of the key elements of this package was the Universal Periodic Review.

What is the goal of the UPR?

The ultimate goal of UPR is the improvement of the human rights situation in every country. The UPR is designed to prompt, support, and expand the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground. To achieve this, the UPR involves assessing States' human rights records and addressing human rights violations wherever they occur. The UPR also aims to provide technical assistance to States and enhance their capacity to deal effectively with human rights challenges and to share best practices in the field of human rights.

When was Cambodia last reviewed?

Cambodia was reviewed on 30 January 2019. During the interactive dialogue, 73 delegations made statements. Cambodia accepted 173 and noted 25 recommendations.

When will the next review take place?

Cambodia will undergo its next review in January 2024.

Who will conduct the review?

The reviews are conducted by the UPR Working Group, which consists of the 47 members of the Council; however any UN Member State can take part in the dialogue. Each State review is assisted by groups of three States, known as "troikas", who serve as rapporteurs. The selection of the troikas for each State is done through a drawing of lots following elections for the Council membership in the General Assembly.

What will the review be based on?

The reviews will be based on three documents:

1. National report: information provided by the State under review;
2. Compilation of UN information: information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities;
3. Other stakeholders report: information from other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.

How will the review be conducted?

The review will take place through an interactive discussion between Cambodia and other UN Member States. This takes place during a meeting of the UPR Working Group. During this discussion any UN Member State can pose questions, comments and/or make recommendations to the States under review. The troikas may group issues or questions to be

shared with the State under review to ensure that the interactive dialogue takes place in a smooth and orderly manner. The duration of the review is three hours and thirty minutes.

Can non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participate in the UPR process?

Yes. NGOs submitted information that was added to the “other stakeholders” report. Information they provided can also be referred to by any of the States taking part in the interactive discussion during the review at the Working Group meeting. NGOs can attend the UPR Working Group sessions and can make statements at the regular session of the Human Rights Council when the outcome of the State reviews are considered.

What human rights obligations are addressed?

The UPR will assess the extent to which Cambodia respects its human rights obligations set out in:

1. The UN Charter;
2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
3. Human rights treaties ratified by Cambodia;
4. Voluntary pledges and commitments made by Cambodia; and
5. Applicable international humanitarian law.

What is the outcome of the review?

Following the review, a report, referred to as the “outcome report” is prepared by the troika with assistance from the OHCHR. This outcome report summarizes the discussion during the review, the recommendations made to Cambodia, and its responses. The Royal Government of Cambodia has the option of accepting or declining any of the recommendations resulting from the review, and must inform the troika of its decisions for inclusion in the outcome report. The outcome report is first adopted by the Working Group and then adopted at the following plenary session of the HRC.

How is the review adopted?

During the Working Group session half an hour is allocated to adopt each of the “outcome reports” for the States reviewed that session. These take place no sooner than 48 hours after the country review. Cambodia has the opportunity to make preliminary comments on the recommendations choosing to either accept or note them. Both accepted and noted recommendations are included in the report. After the report has been adopted, editorial modifications can be made to the report by States on their own statements within the following two weeks.

The report is then adopted at a plenary session of the Human Rights Council (usually a few months later). During the plenary session, Cambodia is able to reply to questions and issues that were not sufficiently addressed during the Working Group and respond to recommendations that were raised by States during the review. Time is also allotted to member and observer States who may wish to express their opinion on the outcome of the review and for NGOs and other stakeholders to make general comments.

What steps are taken as follow up to the review?

The Royal Government of Cambodia has the primary responsibility to implement the recommendations contained in the final outcome. The UPR ensures that all countries are accountable for progress or failure in implementing these recommendations. A mid-term report can be provided by Cambodia on a voluntary basis. In any event, during the next review in the fourth UPR cycle, Cambodia will be expected to provide information on what it has been doing to implement the recommendations made during the past review, as well as on any developments in the field of human rights.

The international community may assist in implementing the recommendations and conclusions regarding capacity-building and technical assistance, in consultation with the country concerned.