

Human Rights Council

Date : 9 October 2014



It is composed of 47 member States, elected in a secret ballot by the majority of members of the General Assembly. The General Assembly takes into account the candidate States' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard.

General responsibilities of the Human Rights Council

The Council defines general human rights policies, and examines the problems which occur, develops new international norms and monitors their application worldwide. The Council has the rights to assess human rights situations anywhere in the world and examine information given to them by the States, NGOs and other sources.

It is also tasked with examining certain issues ([right to education](#), food, religious freedom...), the situation of vulnerable communities ([children in armed conflicts](#), indigenous populations, migrants...).

Human Rights Council Sessions

The Council holds at least three sessions a year, for a total duration of at least 10 weeks. If necessary, the Council can convene extraordinary sessions at the request of a member state. This request for an extraordinary session must be supported by a third of the Council.

Universal Periodic Review

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was established in 2006, with the aim of examining the human rights performance of the member States. Every four years, the member state concerned gives an account to the Council of measures taken to improve the human rights situation on its territory, and to fulfill its obligations in this area.

The UPR is based on the analysis of three documents:

- A report by the country concerned
- A report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, providing a summary of information gathered by the UN on this country
- A report summarizing NGO contributions

Special Procedures

The HRC special procedures examine the situation of a country or a theme (sale of children, right to education, religious freedom...). They are an essential mechanism in ensuring the correct application of human rights.

Special procedures are presented by special rapporteurs, independent experts or working groups. They are independent and impartial. They are tasked with performing studies, advising States, carrying out advocacy, supervising, visiting countries and reporting back to the HRC. In case of human rights violations, the experts are authorised to send appeals or letters of allegations to the State in question, detailing the violations which have been committed.

NGO Participation at the Human Rights Council

Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations provides for the participation of NGOs at the United Nations.

Accredited NGOs can:

- Submit written communications to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, for diffusion on the website
- Give oral presentations and intervene in interactive dialogues with Special Procedures.

- Participate in the negotiation of resolutions
- Organize events to be held alongside official sessions, to tackle certain issues in depth

[Find out our latest actions at the Human Rights Council](#)

The Rights of the Child at the Human Rights Council

Every year, the Council devotes a specific day to examining the rights of the child, at its March session. This “Annual day of discussion on the rights of the child” examines themes which specifically concern children:

- In 2014, the theme was [“Access to justice for children”](#).
- In 2015, the theme chosen is “Towards a better investment in the rights of the child”.

The rights of the child are also taken into account throughout the year, either in the review of a given country, or through special procedures; this is thanks in part to the contributions of NGOs such as BICE.