



UNITED  
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**UN COUNTRY TEAM  
SUPPORT TO TRACKING  
THE FOLLOW-UP  
OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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*UN Country Team Support to Tracking the Follow-up of Human Rights Recommendations* was produced by the UNDG Results Group Give Voice to Common Values and Norms

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# PREFACE

Today, States are increasingly engaging with international human rights mechanisms on progress in implementing recommendations to fulfil their human rights obligations. Recommendations have grown rapidly in number and scope as new treaties have entered into force and more treaty bodies have been created; as a growing number of Special Procedure mandate holders have been created; and as all Member States are now reviewed on a regular basis by the Human Rights Council as part of the Universal Periodic Review.

The large quantity of recommendations has made the task of tracking follow up on the recommendations a complex process. As a result, Member States are increasingly requesting UN support in managing it. Some UN country teams are responding to this call by working with Member States to strengthen institutional capacities for tracking the follow up of recommendations and developing dedicated tracking tools. This support builds on the UN country teams' growing engagement with international human rights mechanisms, including in supporting the reporting process to the Universal Periodic Review and treaty bodies or the visits of Special Procedures and their follow-up

Recognizing the increasing national efforts to create mechanisms to track, report and follow up to human rights

mechanisms, OHCHR has developed the following documents: "National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up – A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms" and the accompanying Study on State Practices of Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms.<sup>1</sup> These documents draw on different country experiences to identify the ingredients for a well-functioning and efficient national mechanism for reporting and follow-up.

This UNDG Study supplements these initiatives by exploring the specific role of the UN system at the country level in supporting the establishment or strengthening of national tracking systems. It outlines key principles for ensuring the mechanisms are sustainable, effective and in line with human rights principles, drawing on emerging good practices. In doing so, the Study aims to encourage similar activities among UN country teams at large and strengthen coherence.

Tracking and follow up of human rights recommendations is not an activity that exists in isolation. It is part of a continuum of reporting, review, coordination, implementation, and monitoring. All of these steps have one larger goal in mind—realizing human rights in the lives of all people, irrespective of their location, condition, identity or status.

<sup>1</sup> See: [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR\\_PUB\\_16\\_1\\_NMRF\\_PracticalGuide.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_16_1_NMRF_PracticalGuide.pdf) & [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR\\_PUB\\_16\\_1\\_NMRF\\_Study.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_16_1_NMRF_Study.pdf).

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- Representatives of ministries, national human rights institutions and parliamentary human rights committees in Moldova and Uganda
- Representatives of numerous civil society organizations in Moldova and Uganda
- Amnesty International, the Center for Civil and Political Rights and WaterLex in Geneva

A special thank you goes to the UN Human Rights Adviser in Moldova and his team for organizing a productive visit to Chisinau, and to the OHCHR and UNFPA teams in Uganda for facilitating a successful mission to Kampala.

The UNDG Results Group: Give Voice to Common Values and Norms supports the realization of the UN's common values and norms, including gender equality and empowerment, across the UN pillars, within the context of delivery of Agenda 2030.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2017, the UNDG coordination mechanisms at the global level were reviewed and re-structured. In this decision, the human rights mainstreaming functions of the UNDG Human Rights Working Group were transitioned into the new Results Group: Give Voice to Common Values and Norms.

# METHODOLOGY

Research for this report took place in mid-2015 using a document review, interviews, and visits to Moldova and Uganda. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators for seven focus countries—Afghanistan, Colombia, Moldova, Morocco, Mozambique, Paraguay and Uganda—were informed of the project and expectations of their teams. A basic questionnaire soliciting information on monitoring and follow-up experiences was drawn up and circulated to participating UN entities in each country, with responses typically generating further e-mail dialogue.

Meetings with OHCHR desk officers and geographical coordinators for the seven countries took place in Geneva. OHCHR thematic experts were also interviewed, including on national human rights action plans, national human rights institutions, regional human rights systems, the UPR, Treat Bodies and Special Procedures and the Universal Human Rights Index. Other consultations involved relevant international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and some Geneva-based diplomatic missions of the seven countries.

A request for information on the monitoring and follow-up of recommendations was posted on the web forum HuriTalk, the UN Human Rights Policy Network, which facilitates dialogue among development practitioners on how to best integrate human rights standards and principles in their work.<sup>3</sup>

Five different human rights recommendation databases and three information-gathering tools were accessed, and trial searches conducted to evaluate their content and functioning.<sup>4</sup> The Inter-Parliamentary Union's PARLINE database was used to collect information on parliamentary human rights committees in the seven countries.

Annual reports of national human rights institutions in all countries were reviewed to assess their engagement with international and domestic human rights recommendations. Finally, the report drew on analysis of a large number of UN, government and non-governmental documents in four languages.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://hrbportal.org/huritalk-corner>.

<sup>4</sup> The databases include those in Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Uganda as well as the Universal Human Rights Index database. The information-gathering tools comprise those in Afghanistan, India and Kenya.

# ACRONYMS

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**CEDAW** Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**CESCR** International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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**CRC** Convention on the Rights of the Child

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**ILO** International Labour Organization

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**NGO** Non-governmental organization

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**OHCHR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

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**UNDG** United Nations Development Group

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**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

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**UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund

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**UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund

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**UPR** Universal Periodic Review

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# SECTION 1:

## TRACKING OF FOLLOW UP ON HUMAN RIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS: THE BASICS

International human rights mechanisms are pillars of the international human rights architecture. They play unique roles in reviewing States' efforts to meet their human rights obligations and in issuing recommendations to help translate human rights standards and commitments into concrete actions that have a positive impact on peoples' lives.

While the overall number of human rights recommendations has grown, however, less attention has been given to systematically tracking their implementation.

This publication explores the rationale for tracking recommendations and their follow up; highlights some early experiences from countries, including the development of concrete tracking tools; and proposes some steps for UN field staff to support these initiatives. It is meant as an introductory guide to help UN country teams support national stakeholders in developing or strengthening national tracking systems. It may also provide a source of ideas for national state actors, civil society as well as international development partners.

Developed by the UN Development Group's Human Rights Working Group, under the leadership of UNFPA, the publication is part of an effort to enhance the engagement of the UN system in supporting following up of human rights recommendations, against a broader backdrop of growing interest in and support for this work.

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### WHAT IS TRACKING OF FOLLOW-UP ON HUMAN RIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS?

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Tracking involves gathering, organizing and systematizing human rights recommendations, assigning responsibility for implementation, and defining and monitoring gains and shortfalls. It primarily helps States, as the main duty-bearers under international human rights law, to coordinate and follow-up implementation of recommendations. In addition to institutions in the executive branch, parliaments, judiciaries, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations can be involved. UN country teams are expected to support these efforts, as part of their assistance to national development efforts and their engagement with UN human rights mechanisms.<sup>5</sup>

Tracking contributes to all stages of the human rights mechanisms' cycle, which covers reporting/visits, review and implementation, follow-up and monitoring and then more reporting. While tracking is mostly concentrated under follow-up and monitoring, it can also contribute to reporting.

Tracking systems can take a number of forms and institutional arrangements depending on the national context. They can be established by the government, or by national human rights institutions, parliamentary human rights committees and civil society networks, among others. They can include tools like databases. Ideally, they should be linked to larger processes, such as national human rights action plans and the preparation of reports to or visits of human rights mechanisms in order to inform national policy.

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<sup>5</sup> See pp. 31-35 of the "UNDG Guidance Note for Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams" for further information.



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## WHY TRACK THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS?

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Several rationales justify creating dedicated systems to track the implementation of human rights recommendations. The first is that despite having commitments to human rights that are unprecedented in human history, in both number and scope, implementation of recommended follow-up action still remains a challenge in many countries. Tracking helps clarify what needs to be done, and underpins more rigorous strategies to tackle implementation gaps.

A second issue is the recent growth in the number of human rights recommendations, particularly from existing and new human rights treaties and their respective monitoring bodies and systems, the country reviews under the Universal Periodic Review cycles and an increased number of Special Procedures under the Human Rights Council. The number of recommendations from regional human rights mechanisms and independent national human rights institutions/bodies and other national institutions, has in many cases also increased. This makes the process of tracking and follow-up more complex, and calls for a more ambitious approach.

A third rationale for tracking systems is that by enabling the thematic “clustering” of different issues and recommendations, it opens up opportunities to build on synergies and coordinate across mechanisms. Implementing a recommendation made by one human rights mechanism might at the same time lead to the implementation of similar recommendations by other human rights mechanisms. National tracking systems hence foster a more comprehensive and strategic approach to following up on recommendations.

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## WHICH RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD BE TRACKED?

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Human rights recommendations are issued by international, regional and national mechanisms.

They are often complementary, and can be combined in strategic, mutually reinforcing ways. A set of international recommendations may offer a high level of political traction, for instance, while regional and country recommendations may feature an advanced degree of technical and regional/country specificity well suited for implementation. For this reason, UN policy stresses adopting a comprehensive approach to follow-up on findings and recommendations of different UN human rights mechanisms and bodies, including by thematic clustering of recommendations.<sup>6</sup>

Human rights tracking generally covers some or all of the following.



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<sup>6</sup> For more information, see the UN Policy on Support to the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review and other Human Rights Mechanisms Recommendations, p. 4.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Primary sources of international human rights recommendations are the human rights treaty bodies, the Universal Periodic Review and independent Human Rights Experts of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, as well as the supervisory bodies of specialized agencies. All identify specific human rights concerns, trends and patterns of violations, and issue recommendations that help countries meet international human rights obligations.

**Treaty bodies** monitor the implementation by State Parties of their obligations under the nine international human rights treaties that form the backbone of the international human rights framework, including through proposing measures to accelerate progress.

The **Universal Periodic Review** of the Human Rights Council allows each Member State to report on the measures being taken to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. Operating under the Human Rights Council, it was designed to ensure universal coverage and equal treatment for all States.

**Special Procedures**, established by the Human Rights Council, are independent human rights experts who report on human rights in accordance with their respective thematic or country mandates. One of their main methods is to identify specific issues and patterns of violations, and make recommendations to address them, including through country visits and related reports or individual communications to States and other stakeholders.

All recommendations from the treaty bodies, Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review can be accessed in the OHCHR Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI), a user-friendly search engine (see: <http://uhri.ohchr.org>).

Additionally, the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council may establish specific mandates for the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Secretary-General to report and make recommendations on specific country situations or thematic issues, or establish an independent commission of inquiry.

United Nations recommendations also come from supervisory bodies of the **International Labour Organization**, which issue recommendations to ensure that countries effectively implement international labour standards, including fundamental principles and rights at work. Regular supervision by the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) and the tripartite Conference Committee on the Application of Standards is based on examining periodic reports from member States and observations by workers' and employers' organizations. Special supervisory procedures cover representations complaints procedures, as well as complaints submitted to the Committee on Freedom of Association.

Other areas of international law include international humanitarian law, refugee law and international environmental agreements.

## AT A GLANCE: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS ARE ISSUED BY:

■ The Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council

■ Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

■ The Human Rights Committee, (CCPR) which monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and its optional protocols

■ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

■ The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which monitors implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)

■ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and its optional protocol (1999)

■ The Committee against Torture (CAT), which monitors implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (1984)

■ The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its optional protocols (2000)

■ The Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW), which monitors implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)

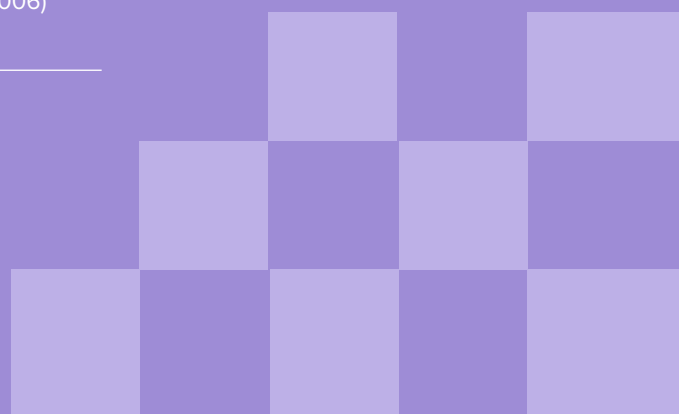
■ The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which monitors implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

■ The Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED), which monitors implementation of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006)

■ The Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture, as part of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture

■ Supervisory bodies of the International Labour Organization: which includes the regular supervisory system (Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations- CEACR and the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards- CAS) and the Special supervisory Procedures.

■ Jurisprudence database: There are also treaty bodies that receive and consider complaints from individuals such as the CCPR, CAT, CEDAW, CERD, CRPD, CED, CESCR, and CRC. The jurisprudence database is intended to be a single source of the human rights recommendations and legal interpretation of international human rights law cases.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REGIONAL BODIES

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Regional human rights recommendations include those of the African human rights system, the European human rights system and the Inter-American human rights system. In some cases, their recommendations can be tailored more closely to the regional and national contexts. They may carry additional or stronger levels of legal obligation and/or political commitment than UN recommendations. Regional human rights bodies have in some cases set higher human rights standards than those recognized in international human rights instruments.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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While the implementation of international human rights recommendations helps ensure national alignment with international standards, national recommendations can make complementary connections to additional issues specific to a given country context. Recommendations may come from national human rights institutions, specialized commissions on women, children, and anti-discrimination and equality; as well as national mechanisms to prevent torture, and other national entities.

An increasing number of countries have established truth commissions or similar bodies to come to terms with transitions such as from conflict to peace or from authoritarian rule to democracy. These bodies may investigate past human rights violations and produce detailed recommendations.

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## UGANDA'S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION BUILDS ON INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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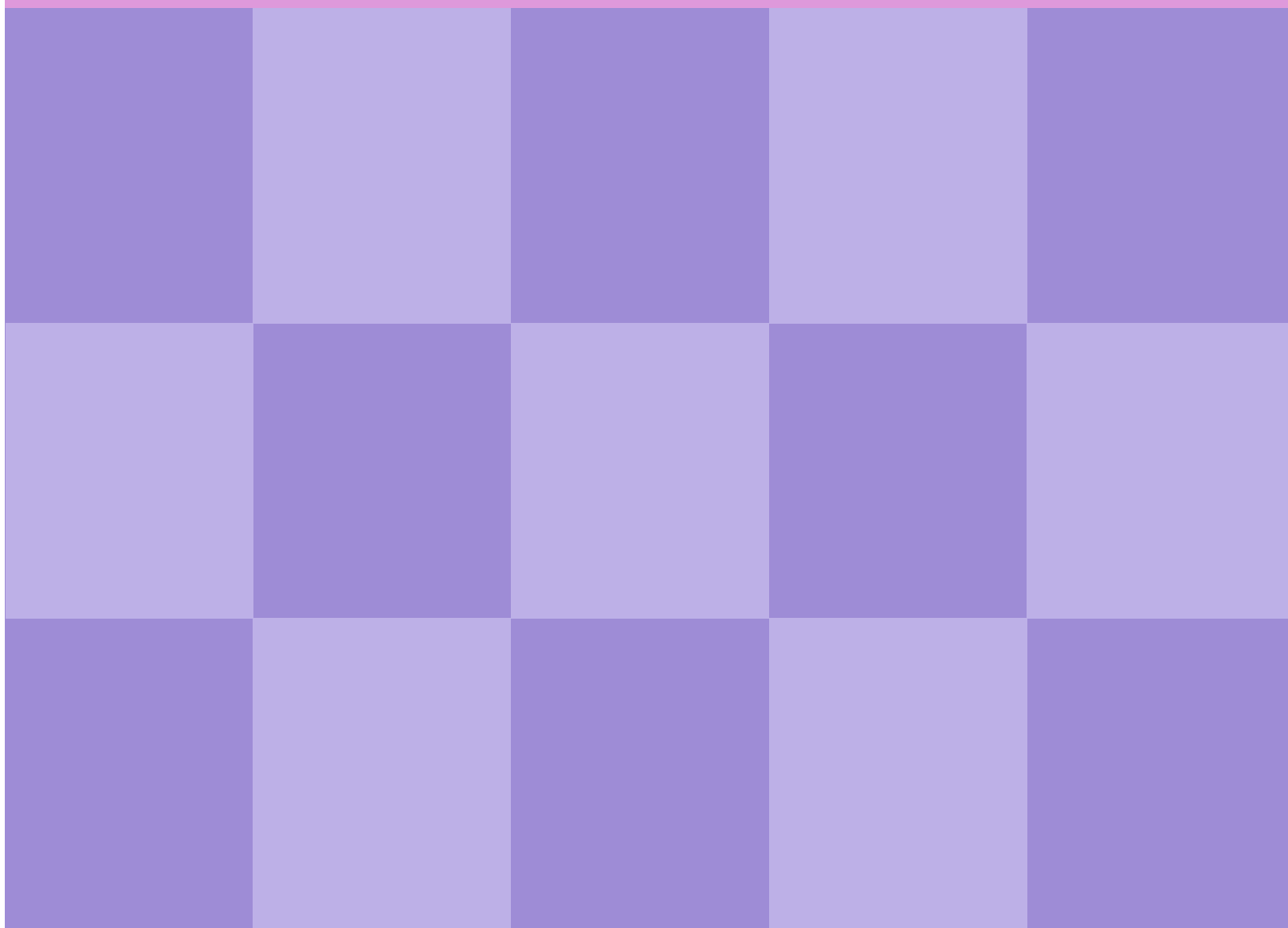
One example of how a national human rights mechanism can add value to recommendations issued by international mechanisms can be found in Uganda. UN human rights mechanisms have encouraged the Government to increase income-generating activities in rural areas. The

Uganda Human Rights Commission suggests that the Ministry of Water and Environment develop and implement a flood management strategy, with a focus on de-silting rivers to support local residents' right to a livelihood. The recommendation tells the United Nations and the Government

what the problem is (flooding), suggests one solution (de-silting), and proposes whom to work with (the Ministry of Water and Environment) and where (Kibaale District).

*Source: Uganda Human Rights Commission, 17th Annual Report, 2014, Recommendation 9.2.12, p. 208.*

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# SECTION 2:

## DIFFERENT METHODS TO TRACK IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS: INSTITUTIONS

Tracking implementation of human rights recommendations can involve a variety of different institutions, some of which are highlighted here based on experiences in individual countries. In any given context, one or more of these may be operating simultaneously.

Tracking may be embedded in one government ministry, across ministries or in a separate institution. While often it takes place within a government institution, ideally it involves the broader participation of parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, civil society groups and other stakeholders.

In supporting governments to track follow up of recommendations, the importance of national ownership, participation, and sustainability should guide the UN's approach.

### UN SUPPORT TO TRACKING OF FOLLOW-UP BY GOVERNMENTS

A number of governments have established national mechanisms to report and follow up to recommendations from international human rights mechanisms. They may be established within a ministry, across ministries or as a separate institution.<sup>7</sup> The design and functions of national mechanisms differ substantially by country. Many are involved in tracking and reporting on the implementation of recommendations as well as the development and implementation of public policies on human rights, related capacity building and human rights promotion in general. They may carry out assessments of implementation of recommendations, which can be used as important inputs to accountability exercises conducted by the national human rights institution, parliamentary human rights committees and/or civil society organizations.

Some of the advantages of national mechanisms include their access to information from ministries, their acceptance as a coordinating body among government colleagues, and their relatively privileged access to government financial and human resources.

<sup>7</sup> For more details see OHCHR's publications (2016): "National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up – A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms" and the accompanying "Study on State Practices of Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms".

## A. MINISTERIAL STRUCTURES TO TRACK RECOMMENDATIONS

Traditionally, national reporting and follow-up mechanisms have been housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In other countries, the Ministry of Justice takes this role. Being situated in a single institution comes with benefits such as dedicated staff and budgets, strong ownership and a well-defined mandate—although the last comes with the risk of a narrower focus.

### MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

A mechanism placed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be well positioned to draw on the ministry's often profound knowledge and experience of the workings of the UN and regional human rights mechanisms. Human rights information requests from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to other ministries, institutions and local governments can therefore be precise and targeted. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is well placed to build national capacity for the coordination of reporting, but less for coordination of follow-up actions. While its mandate to uphold the country's international image can spur a high level of responsiveness, it can also potentially lead to assessments that are more focused on creating a favourable impression than fully acknowledging human rights deficits. This poses a risk that tracking might aim more at "pleasing" the international system than achieving results for rights-holders. In some cases, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not sufficiently connected to line ministries' programmatic and sectoral activities, undercutting its ability to effectively oversee the implementation of human rights recommendations.

### MINISTRIES OF JUSTICE

Compared to mechanisms in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, those located in another ministry, typically the Justice Ministry, are likely to be more inward-looking bodies. Their primary concern is government accountability to domestic constituencies through Parliament or in relation to the national human rights institution.

The point of departure tends to be the country's constitution and national human rights obligations engrained therein. The Ministry of Justice may take a more detailed, technical approach. It may have a stronger imperative to demonstrate

results than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which acts more as the custodian of the country's international image. One scenario that has worked well is when the Ministry of Justice coordinates an inter-ministerial body, thereby combining the advantages of the focus and resources of a single institution with the capacity to mobilize activities across multiple sectors.

### MINISTRIES OF LABOUR

For tracking recommendations relating to the implementation of international labour standards, including fundamental rights at work, the Ministry of Labour is the main governmental body for follow-up. It typically works closely with other ministries. Social dialogue is key, with workers' and employers' organizations playing central roles in monitoring.

In Argentina, the Coordination on Gender Equality and Equality of Opportunities (CEGIOT) established in 2007 by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social security has the objective of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all activities of the Ministry. This body has been in charge of following up and replying to the recommendations from the ILO Committee of Experts concerning the instruments on equality and non-discrimination.

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## B. INTER-MINISTERIAL STRUCTURES TO REPORT AND TRACK IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

National mechanisms for reporting and follow-up which are of a more inter-ministerial nature are established across two or more ministries through a joint structure, while still having an Executive Secretariat in one Ministry. Inter-ministerial structures can directly engage with diverse ministries and other institutions. They can be better positioned to capture synergies that may arise from coordinated actions in different sectors, and draw in diverse and in-depth expertise. At the same time, they require effective leadership to regularly bring different stakeholders together in order to sustain momentum on activities and to avoid loss of ownership.



## MOZAMBIQUE'S DIRECTORATE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Mozambique has situated its main mechanism for promoting and protecting human rights in the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs- the Directorate for Human Rights. The Directorate operates through an Inter-Ministerial Human Rights Working Group, involving the ministries of foreign affairs, education and human development, health, internal affairs and women and social action.

The Directorate for Human Rights has developed a monitoring and evaluation framework for the implementation of each human rights recommendation, organizing recommendations into groups, listing the related human rights instruments and development plans, identifying the expected results, the necessary actions to be taken to achieve those results, progress indicators, verification means, time frames, responsible institutions, costs and sources of funding. The monitoring committee of the Directorate meets on a quarterly basis and generates progress reports. This elaborate monitoring and evaluation framework has allowed the government to provide updated information to the UN human rights mechanisms every year.

## TRACKING OF FOLLOW UP BY PARLIAMENTS

Parliaments can play prominent roles in national tracking and follow-up systems. Most have committees with some kind of human rights mandate or even an exclusive one, typically focused on legislative reform and drafting of laws. A human rights dimension is often added to justice or constitutional affairs committees. Equality and/or gender-focused committees may also exist.

While some committees have only advisory roles, others carry out important monitoring functions and may receive individual complaints. Their relationship and cooperation with other parliamentary, governmental, administrative and national human rights institutions vary, with considerable consequences for the impact of their work.

The Parliamentary Human Rights Committee in Uganda backs the inclusion of human rights considerations in every aspect of legislative work. It is tasked with tracking and follow-up on national and international human rights recommendations, and with holding the executive branch accountable for implementing recommendations from the Uganda Human Rights Commission. The Committee, established in 2012, comprises 26 Parliamentarians from the four parties as well as independents.

In South Africa, all draft reports submitted under international human rights treaties are debated in Parliament, which is mandated under the 1996 Constitution to scrutinize and oversee Government performance, including implementation of the recommendations from human rights mechanisms. During the debate period, Parliament holds public hearings, calls in ministers, and requests documents and reports from a wide range of departments and civil society groups. Parliamentarians are included in national delegations to the treaty bodies to ensure they fully understand recommendations.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For more information see: "Human Rights—Handbook for Parliamentarians No. 26" IPU and OHCHR, 2016 Chapter 10 "Ensuring national implementation" (page 97).



## TRACKING OF FOLLOW UP BY NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

Governmental structures for reporting and follow-up offer some level of accountability and can draw on ready access to government information and close ties to ministries and other government institutions established in accordance with the Paris principles (GA resolution 48/134). But a greater capacity to credibly assess government performance and hold duty-bearers accountable often requires independent national human rights institutions. These must be adequately resourced and positioned to conduct rigorous, impartial analysis.

National human rights institutions vary in their mandates and capacity for implementation. But they often are directly or indirectly responsible for monitoring the implementation of human rights recommendations.

By definition, the work of national human rights institutions is operational, often addressing very specific and local human rights and social development challenges. Their level of contextual knowledge may surpass that of UN and regional human rights mechanisms. At the same time, national institutions, being so close to “home” can run into difficulties when taking on highly sensitive issues. This underscores the useful complementarity between international, regional and domestic human rights mechanisms.

Since the establishment of the UPR, national human rights institutions have increasingly engaged in well-organized regional and international coalitions, and have an enhanced role in UN human rights bodies.<sup>9</sup> Special procedures<sup>10</sup> and treaty bodies have also enhanced their cooperation with national human rights institutions.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, “Promoting participation: Why and how national human rights institutions should be allowed to contribute at the United Nations,” International Service for Human Rights, June 2015.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Resolution 16/21 of the Human Rights Council which says that the national human rights institution consistent with the Paris Principles of the country concerned shall be entitled to intervene immediately after the country concerned during the interactive dialogue, following the presentation of a country mission report by a special procedure mandate holder.



## TRACKING FOLLOW UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN COLOMBIA AND UGANDA

In Colombia, the annual report from the national human rights institution provides information on follow-up to international recommendations, namely the pre-cautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to protect individuals and communities from further human rights violations.<sup>11</sup> The Colombian Ombudsman’s Office regularly follows up on the safety of beneficiaries of the pre-cautionary measures, and documents government implementation of them, including by conducting field missions to the often remote locations where beneficiaries live.

The Uganda Human Rights Commission, established under the 1995 Constitution “to monitor the Government’s compliance with international treaty and convention obligations on human rights,” produces an extensive annual report as well as ad hoc thematic reports with recommendations to different ministries, departments and agencies. The annual report includes an entire chapter dedicated to government compliance with Commission recommendations, which are analysed and graphically presented as either ‘fully complied’, ‘partially complied’ or ‘not complied’.

The report also addresses the obligations and performance of different ministries, departments and government agencies. To follow-up and hold duty-bearers accountable, the Commission calls periodic meetings with entities on steps they have taken to implement recommendations. Each year, the Commission’s report is submitted to the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, which organizes hearings with relevant ministries and government departments to scrutinize performance in relation to recommendations. The Commission and Committee, working in tandem, have made progress in a number of human rights areas.

<sup>11</sup> “Vigésimo primer Informe Administrativo y Financiero del Defensor del Pueblo al Congreso de la República,” Bogotá 2013, Chapter 6, p. 89.



## IN THE PHILIPPINES, THE GOVERNMENT, INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY MONITOR THE UPR TOGETHER

The Philippines UPR National Tripartite Monitoring mechanism engages the Government; independent bodies, such as the Commission on Human Rights, the Civil Service Commission and the Ombudsperson; and civil society to track progress on implementing all UPR recommendations. The process helps to identify actors in charge of different recommendations, and conceptualize recommendations within existing Government frameworks.

## IV. TRACKING OF FOLLOW-UP BY CIVIL SOCIETY

Many national efforts to track implementation of international human rights recommendations are carried out by civil society organizations. Some conduct their own tracking; others participate in broader national tracking systems. Their efforts are encouraged in an environment that guarantees freedom of expression, access to information, transparency and protection against reprisals.

Civil society actions typically fall in three categories. The first involves the production of State reports and follow-up on subsequent recommendations, often focused on particular issue areas, with repeated engagement. The second entails comprehensive national tracking cutting across different categories of human rights. A third encompasses international support organized around a specific theme or mechanism where global monitoring backs national initiatives. All of these tend to draw on groups joining forces through networks or coalitions.

**The first category** includes, for example, coalitions of women's groups working together to produce shadow reports and following up on implementation of recommendations from CEDAW,<sup>12</sup> disability organizations using the recommen-

dations from the Committee on the Convention of the Rights of Disabled Persons to influence policy on accessibility, or human rights defenders analysing and reporting on implementation of recommendations from a country visit by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.

Some groups form temporarily around a specific issue, such as ad hoc efforts to produce alternative reports to State reports, but then become more permanent through follow-up activities in relation to implementation of recommendations. The sophistication of these efforts varies, but with adequate support, they have potential for effective monitoring, including through tapping often detailed knowledge of local conditions for rights-holders.

### **The second category of civil society follow-up efforts**

entails national, comprehensive tracking systems to monitor implementation of recommendations. The UPR process established two particularly important elements for such systems to flourish: predictability and long-term vision (fixed dates, clear process, universal State acceptance and reporting, etc.), as well as resources from the international community.

One example in this category is India's Human Rights Working Group. A national coalition of 14 human rights organizations and independent experts, monitors and reports on national and international human rights obligations. Its web-based monitoring tool was created using the UPR recommendations, but with the intention for it to serve as a broader tracking mechanism for all international and national recommendations. The tool clusters and summarizes the recommendations, links them to other national and international recommendations, proposes implementation indicators, identifies responsible State institutions, and provides updates on budgetary, legislative, policy, and judicial measures taken by the State.

<sup>12</sup> See for example the Uganda CSO Task Force on CEDAW, coordinated by the Uganda Women's Network, [www.uwonet.or.ug](http://www.uwonet.or.ug).



## SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY TO TRACK FOLLOW UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND MOZAMBIQUE

UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina supported a project to establish a monitoring network of NGOs to assess implementation of CEDAW. The main aim was to include as many NGOs as possible, in particular from smaller communities, to monitor implementation of the Convention and prepare shadow reports to the CEDAW Committee. Indicators were developed to track implementation of the concluding observations of the Committee, and guidance published to help NGOs facilitate

data collection, analysis and reporting on the basis of the indicators. Trainings and working meetings further strengthened NGO capacity and built monitoring networks.

Civil society in Mozambique has been highly involved in tracking follow-up activities, often in close collaboration with the Government and UN agencies. Different constellations of human rights coalitions form, track and follow up on recommendations in specific areas of rights. UNFPA has mobilized women, girls, youth and several marginalized populations to advocate for inclusion in the UPR Action Plan of follow-up activities to recommendations on early pregnancy and marriage, obstetric fistula, sexual abuse and violence against women. UNFPA's assurances that the agency could assist with implementation convinced the government to include sexual and reproductive health activities in the mid-term review of the Action Plan in June 2013.<sup>13</sup>

13 UNFPA, "From Commitment to Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights," p. 40.

Kenya's Stake Holders' Coalition for the UPR stands out for being constituted by over 97 member organizations, and its unique partnership with the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights. They cooperated to produce the Outcome Charter, a recommendations monitoring tool, meant to be updated every year. While being based on UPR recommendations, it includes joint proposals from the Coalition and the Commission on implementing the recommendations, including timelines and monitoring commitments by specific coalition members. The partnership has been successful in part due to the Commission's willingness to serve in a facilitating and not dominating role, and to effectively use its greater access to national and international agencies.<sup>14</sup>

**A third category of civil society follow-up efforts** involves international NGOs and coalitions formed around a thematic issue or specific human rights mechanism. Some offer global monitoring and follow-up tools that can support national efforts at follow-up and implementation. "UPR Info" for example has conducted a mid-term implementation assessment for 165 States from the first UPR cycle, which provides information for its Implementation of the Recommendations Index.<sup>15</sup> UPR stakeholders, including States, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and UN entities in each country, were asked to comment on levels of implementation for 20,452 recommendations.<sup>16</sup>

Civil society organizations offer critical independent perspectives in monitoring and follow-up on recommendations, including those gleaned from close involvement with rights-holders. At the same time, these groups face a number of challenges, such as limits on precise and reliable statistical information, and a lack of direct access to State duty-bearers.

In some cases, those cooperating with the UN on human rights issues including by providing information to UN human rights mechanisms, face threats and reprisals.<sup>17</sup> The Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council have repeatedly condemned reprisals.<sup>18</sup> In October 2016, the Secretary-General, in consultations with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, asked the Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, to lead the efforts within the UN system to put a stop to intimidation and reprisals against those cooperating with the UN on human rights.

There is clear scope for cooperation between national institutions and civil society. UN country teams can help foster consultation and dialogue between the two groups, and between them and government mechanisms for reporting and follow up.

14 Accounting for Human Rights Protection Under the UPR: The Difference Kenya's Stakeholders Made, KNCHR, September 2011, p. 1.

15 See: [www.upr-info.org/followup/](http://www.upr-info.org/followup/).

16 Beyond Promises – The Impact of the UPR on the Ground, UPR-Info 2014, pp. 15-17.

17 For a detailed account of the reprisals phenomenon and how to end such acts, see, for example, *The Reprisals Handbook*, International Service for Human Rights, Geneva, 2013. See: [www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/article/files/isshr\\_reprisals\\_handbook\\_web.pdf](http://www.ishr.ch/sites/default/files/article/files/isshr_reprisals_handbook_web.pdf).

18 See annual reports of the Secretary-General on reprisals, the latest being the one published in 2016: Report of the Secretary-General on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights (AHRC/33/19). See also UN Human Rights Council resolution 12/2 and 24/24, Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, October 2013.

# SECTION 3:

## DIFFERENT METHODS TO TRACK FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS: TOOLS

Actors tracking implementation of human rights recommendations typically turn to common tools such as national human rights action plans and databases. Diverse in design and application, tools may be used together or independently. If employed well, they advance the implementation of recommendations, as well as, more broadly, the principles of transparency, accountability and meaningful participation. Effectiveness depends largely on clear lines of ownership and responsibility to sustain active use.

The actual process of adopting a follow-up plan to implement human rights recommendations and creating tools to facilitate the dissemination of recommendations, and the tracking of implementation of recommendations is often as important as the end result. Formal involvement of representatives of the three branches of the state and civil society organizations can facilitate common understanding and agreement on key human rights challenges and define priority steps to address them. This then leads to more readily linking human rights recommendations to current public policies, budgets and plans.

Some governments may claim that developing plans (follow-up plans for the implementation of recommendations or national human rights action plans) will require resources that they do not yet have. From this perspective, there is little rationale for a national human rights action plan because implementing all aspects will be too costly. Under the principle of progressive realization, however, designing a plan, and establishing objectives, intended results and indicators for measuring progress is a minimum baseline in all countries. Budgetary allocations can then be progressively assigned over time.

### NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLANS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

National human rights action plans, with explicit or implicit links to human rights recommendations, have been advocated since the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in 1993.<sup>19</sup> The main purpose of the National human rights action plans is not necessarily to track and follow up on international recommendations, but to elaborate a truly participatory national human rights diagnosis. Such plans should be the basis for a long-term, multisector, multi-institutional operational approach to address priority concerns with the international human rights recommendations used to inform the processes.<sup>20</sup> It should detail specific actions and responsible actors, backed by systematic monitoring and evaluation frameworks with measurable and time-bound indicators.

Plans are generally adopted and implemented by governments, given their mandate for complying with human rights commitments. They tend to be most effective when they are well-connected to different sectoral development plans implemented by line ministries and other government bodies, and should support the incorporation of human rights norms into public policies and programmes. Defining very clearly where substantial resources are needed and where not, avoids using “lack of funding” to justify incomplete implementation. A communications strategy can help build awareness and buy in.

If properly prepared and designed, including through extensive consultations and broad participation across different social sectors, a National human rights action plan can offer an advanced level of precision and evidence that bolsters the implementation of international recommendations.

<sup>19</sup> The outcome document of the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria in 1993.

<sup>20</sup> See also OHCHR, “Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review and Other Human Rights Mechanisms’ Recommendation: Experiences from the Development, Implementation and Review of National Human Rights Plans of Action”, 2015.

Operating in the dual normative framework of UN and European conventions and mechanisms, Moldova has long experience in developing national human rights action plans and using them to incorporate international human rights recommendations into public policies and programmes. Its first plan was supervised by the Human Rights Committee of Parliament, with important technical and financial support from the United Nations. A second plan was supervised and coordinated by a National Implementation Commission made up of all relevant ministries, the Bureau of Interethnic Relations, civil society representatives, the UN Human Rights Adviser and UNDP, and representatives of the Council of Europe and some diplomatic missions. One lesson learned is that implementation mechanisms need to be flexible enough so that they can, over time, incorporate new recommendations issued by the UN and regional human rights machineries.

Some countries create National human rights action plans explicitly to implement international recommendations, although this may stray slightly from the original concept of a 'home-grown' plan built on a national human rights assessment. In Kenya, for instance, soon after the first UPR process, stakeholders led by the national human rights institution and the Department of Justice developed a Plan of Action to guide implementation of recommendations.



## AFGHANISTAN'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS ACTION PLAN

In 2013, Afghanistan's Human Rights Support Unit launched the Recommendations Action Plan, outlining some 242 activities to implement recommendations from the UPR, CRC and CESC, with reference also made to ILO Conventions. Recommendations were categorized in 27 clusters that include lists of all relevant programmatic activities, expected results, responsible institutions, necessary resources, monitoring entities and projected time-frames. In drafting the plan, the Unit involved all ministries responsible for implementation.

## DATABASES

A national database on human rights recommendations, or any other form of information management system, can be a useful tool for disseminating recommendations at national level, as well as for preparing follow-up plans, tracking and reporting on progress in the implementation of human rights recommendations. An increasing number of countries are using these. Any entity with a mandate, or interest, in assessing progress in the implementation of recommendations can set up a database.

Databases fall in a few broad categories. A first category presents already publicly available information in one central web location, including reporting calendars, recommendations, State party reports and sometimes shadow reports. It has a 'Search' function for recommendations and makes the link between recommendations and rights enshrined in the Constitution and international human rights treaties. An example is the government database of Ecuador- SIDERECHOS- which was created with the technical assistance and support of the OHCHR Human Rights Adviser and the United Nations in Ecuador.<sup>21</sup>

A second category of database goes further by assigning institutional responsibilities for implementing specific recommendations, and sometimes time-frames, budgets and indicators. Created by civil society, the India Human Rights Working Group web-based recommendations monitoring tool offers a good example of a tool to track the status of follow up of recommendations by responsible stakeholders.<sup>22</sup>

A third category includes the content and functions of the first two categories, and presents State measures to implement recommendations.

21 See: [www.siderechos.gob.ec/SIDerecho/web/Home.do](http://www.siderechos.gob.ec/SIDerecho/web/Home.do).

22 See section on civil society tracking for more information.

The UN's support for databases should emphasize the need for a comprehensive database that covers the recommendations of all human rights mechanisms and which is established by the State; given the responsibility of State to implement recommendations. A public database is particularly valuable, instilling a greater degree of accountability, especially if it is regularly updated.

In terms of organizing recommendations, countries have created their own thematic clustering of rights in the databases. The aim of thematically clustering recommendations is to reduce duplication and build on synergies across different follow up activities. In creating categories of rights, ample room for adding categories that are based on priority national concerns is needed. Countries such as Ecuador, Paraguay and Mexico, with large indigenous populations, might need more specialized categories on indigenous rights. Countries that have gone through truth-seeking processes, such as Morocco and Paraguay, might want to make sure recommendations from those processes fit into their databases.

A valuable tool for setting up a national database is the Universal Human Rights Index managed by OHCHR, which comprises recommendations by treaty bodies, Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, and uses the categories used by the international human rights mechanisms themselves (<http://uhri.ohchr.org/en>). Country recommendations can be printed and/or exported from the Index. OHCHR has also developed a tool called 'GetAnnotations', already tested by Paraguay, that allows countries to directly transfer recommendations from the Index to any type of databases.

A participatory process to develop the database, covering different branches of government and civil society, institutes transparency and builds in broad ownership from the start. It can foster consensus on key human rights challenges and priority responses, and facilitate links to public policies, and institutional budgets and plans.

Following the creation of SIMORE, OHCHR developed an application called 'GetAnnotations' for Paraguay to directly be able to export information from the Universal Human Rights Index to SIMORE. In addition, using the experience of SIMORE Paraguay, and experiences in other countries, OHCHR is currently completing the development of a generic multi-lingual/ multi-site application to be offered free of charge to other countries, in order to create their own national databases of recommendations, and to have a tool to prepare follow-up plans and be able to periodically report on progress in the implementation of recommendations.

In 2014, modeled on SIMORE, with technical support from OHCHR, and funding from the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance for the implementation of the UPR, the Uganda Human Rights Commission also developed a public database and search engine for all UN and African Union human rights recommendations, as well as detailed annual recommendations issued by the Commission ([www.uhrcdatabase.ug](http://www.uhrcdatabase.ug)). Recommendations can be searched by source, theme and year, and by the ministry, department or government agency responsible for its implementation.

Currently, only a few databases are updated with information on concrete steps taken by government institutions to implement recommendations. In general, updated information tends to be limited and of varying comprehensiveness, often making it next to impossible to assess performance.<sup>23</sup> This challenge is compounded by the fact that many recommendations are not sufficiently precise, which, combined with a selective or too general follow-up entry in a database, yields a very unclear picture of the state of implementation.

Generally, sustaining databases at an optimal level over the long term requires both human and financial resources, and most importantly, institutional ownership and commitment. Some databases are designed to be updated by a large number of individuals from different institutions. In theory, this keeps information current, but holding many officials from different institutions accountable for updates can be challenging. Staff responsible for the database at the Uganda Human Rights Commission described the difficulty in getting civil servants from different ministries and institutions to update a database for which their institution was not ultimately responsible, for example. The style and length of the entries varies significantly without substantial resources dedicated to quality control and editing.

Overall sustainability is closely linked to financial sustainability. Government databases can draw on regular ministry budgets. Funding through international cooperation might be necessary at the initial stage, but over the longer term, continued international funding poses a risk of undercutting national ownership.

23 Consultant's review of the Mexican, Paraguayan and Ugandan databases. The Paraguayan Government's database for example, provides no follow-up information on any of the recommendations by the Human Rights Committee. Further, only 38 of the 129 UPR recommendations have follow-up information listed, and only 10 of the 21 recommendations from the Committee on the Prevention of Torture (2011).





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## PARAGUAY'S SIMORE DATABASE

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One of the most well-known experiences with a database is in Paraguay, which was created with the technical support and funding from OHCHR. Known as SIMORE, its purpose is to systematize tracking, and identify priorities and challenges, responsible institutions, timeframes and progress on follow up. SIMORE was publicly launched in 2014 and is now accessible to state institutions, civil society and the public. Users can search it by year, human rights mechanism, population group, subject/right or institution.

With the help of SIMORE, Paraguay presented a mid-term UPR report in September 2014. SIMORE was also a useful information-gathering tool for preparing State reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the UPR second cycle. Information from the system has helped state institutions design public policies, including the National Plan on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and informed the visit of Special Procedures, such as the Special Rapporteurs on the rights of persons with disabilities, on the right to food or on the right to health. Public users include journalists, representatives of NGOs and university students.

The mandate for SIMORE originated in Paraguay's National Human Rights Action Plan. Developing the database involved representatives of the three branches of the State,

the General Prosecutor's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Ombudsman and civil society.<sup>24</sup> Around 70 civil servants from 28 institutions attended workshops that built common understanding and helped define database entry sheets for each prioritized recommendation. These were then categorized into seven clusters of recommendations,<sup>25</sup> and linked to current national policies, budgets and work plans. The inter-institutional process has been successful in encouraging State-wide recognition of specific challenges and fostering deeper commitment to coordinated efforts to respond to these.<sup>26</sup>

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24 SIMORE won a prize for inclusion and empowerment at the 2015 World Summit Awards Paraguay. This recognized efforts to promote the reduction of digital gaps and work with excluded and vulnerable groups, such as women, the elderly, persons with disabilities and children.

25 The seven areas were: 1) institutional strengthening/LGTB, 2) poverty, 3) children/youth, 4) elderly persons/persons with disabilities, 5) detained or incarcerated persons, 6) women, 7) indigenous population/population of African descent/migrants.

26 SIMORE entry on 20/04/2014, in response to a 2011 Committee against Torture recommendation: "El Ministerio de la Mujer ha impulsado la aprobación del Proyecto de Ley de Salud Sexual y Reproductiva que actualmente se encuentra en la Comisión de Equidad de Género de la Cámara de Senadores, sin Dictamen. El manual de Normas de atención humanizada post aborto, aprobado por Resolución No. 146 por la cual se establece la obligatoriedad de brindar acceso a los servicios de salud a los servicios de salud de calidad y atención sin discriminaciones, con efectivo cumplimiento del deber de confidencialidad y garantía de plena vigencia del secreto profesional en la atención."



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## MEXICO'S HUMAN RIGHTS DATABASE

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In Mexico, the Foreign Ministry and the widely respected Center for Economic Investigation and Teaching manage an international recommendations database, with support from OHCHR. The database disseminates and monitors follow-up on recommendations from the UN human rights system as well as legal decisions by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. It is aimed at federal and local authorities, civil society actors, academics, journalists and the public at large, with the ambition of being user-friendly, permanent, updated and publicly accessible.

The database provides current information on implementation measures by the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Keeping it up to date has been challenging, but many entries are useful. For example, anyone interested in Mexico's implementation of the Concluding Observations from the Human Rights Committee on the reform of the Mexican military justice system can quickly find out from the database that in June 2014, a Government decree reformed the Military Justice Code.

# SECTION 4:

## STRENGTHENING NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TRACKING SYSTEMS

Tracking the follow up of human rights recommendations should in all cases aim to advance the fulfillment of human rights obligations. Tracking is not an objective in itself. Among countries who set up tracking mechanisms, there is likely to be some level of political commitment to meeting human rights obligations.

Many factors influence the design and objectives of national human rights tracking systems, including existing institutional structures and capacities, the level of government commitment to implementation of human rights recommendations, and resources available at country level. These elements need to be carefully assessed, paying close attention to the importance of adapting to different national contexts.

At the same time, the existing experience as documented in this study provides some common parameters that can be applied across countries. For instance, holistic approaches that involve multiple institutions and tools are generally more effective, given the wide scope of issues covered by human rights recommendations. Strong national ownership, within and beyond the government, helps to ensure that tracking systems are sustainable.

Linking the tracking systems with the localization of the SDGs, national and sectoral development plans, as well as with the UNDAF, bolsters synergy, coherence and impact of these mechanisms.

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### WHEN SUPPORTING THESE MECHANISMS, UNCTS SHOULD ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

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#### PROMOTE A COMPREHENSIVE, INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO TRACKING FOLLOW UP OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS RECOMMENDATIONS

Human rights recommendations from different sources—international, regional and national—can reinforce each other. A tracking system allowing a comprehensive vantage point across different processes and their recommendations can identify opportunities in one area or process that might spur progress in others.

Both national and regional recommendations can provide more detail and context for international human rights recommendations, and may amplify political momentum.

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#### MAKE ENGAGEMENT PROACTIVE AND AIMED AT STRENGTHENING NATIONAL OWNERSHIP

There is a growing interest and commitment among States to establish and strengthen national tracking systems. This presents opportunities for UNCTs to be proactive in encouraging systems aligned with international norms. While in many countries the main responsibility for interacting with international human rights mechanisms is embedded in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the Ministry of Labour for supervision on international labour standards, it may be appropriate to consider ways to instigate cooperation and dialogues across multiple institutions, including line ministries, parliaments, national human rights institutions, civil society and other stakeholders. Greater participation and inclusiveness foster stronger national ownership, both within and outside of government.

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## ENCOURAGE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUSTAINABLE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES TO ENGAGE WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

UN support for government structures for reporting and follow-up on human rights recommendations should aim at sustainability, beyond, for instance, the completion of a single report, i.e. the creation of an institutionalized national mechanism for reporting and follow-up. Whatever form these structures take, whether ministerial, inter-ministerial or institutionally separate, they benefit from a comprehensive formal legal or policy mandate. UN assistance can aim at building four fundamental capacities: for engagement with international human rights mechanisms; coordination across government entities and State actors; capacity to consult with the countries national human rights institutions and civil society; and information management capacity.<sup>27</sup>

## PARTNERSHIPS WITH NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (NHRIS)

Another priority is to strengthen tracking systems led by national human rights institutions. UN country teams can assist their efforts to follow up and implement both their own locally grounded and specific human rights recommendations and international human rights recommendations. This should be a well-integrated process, where actions on different recommendations are orchestrated to mutually reinforce each other.

## ADVOCATE FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

National action plans on human rights recommendations are important steps towards implementation, signaling political investment and translating broad principles into the specific actions needed to realize them. Plans should set out specific timelines, indicators and benchmarks for success, and be clear on which actors are accountable for particular actions.

## ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF DATABASES

Some form of national database to consolidate and track follow up of human rights recommendations can be a valuable tool. In considering assistance for such an exercise, UN country teams should aim for the most ambitious model that can feasibly be achieved and sustained over time, as this improves quality and impact. The use of the Universal Human Rights Index database, maintained by OHCHR, as well as available additional applications for use at national level, should be considered. They should encourage involvement of multiple government and civil society organizations to instill long-term commitment, foster transparency, and improve the richness and accuracy of information collected.

Recognizing that recommendations from different sources may overlap, clustering recommendations within the database can reveal gaps and contradictions, help avoid duplicated follow-up measures, inform more powerful advocacy, and shape more holistic responses equipped to simultaneously act on multiple fronts.

<sup>27</sup> See the OHCHR (2016): "National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up – A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms".

### SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY TRACKING SYSTEMS

In addition to assisting tracking and follow-up efforts by governments and national human rights institutions, UN country teams can consider backing complementary efforts by civil society, including where this entails going beyond participation in government-administered reporting and follow-up processes. In some cases, NGO tracking systems can provide a further degree of detail through close links to people on the ground, and contribute to greater accountability.

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### USE INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEEPEN ENGAGEMENT WITH AUTHORITIES

In many cases, tracking international recommendations can provide an entry point for more strategic, prolonged action by the UN system with governments.

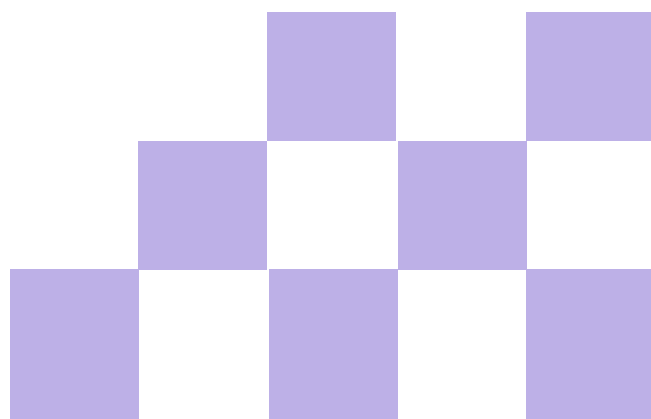
Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and other human rights mechanisms often provide solid evidence on human rights violations as part of their recommendations. This, along with the recommendations themselves, can inform advocacy and other programmatic strategies. Tracking can in turn measure and monitor progress, and be especially valuable in pinpointing the gaps many middle-income countries still confront—whether on particular development or rights issues, or among specific population groups.

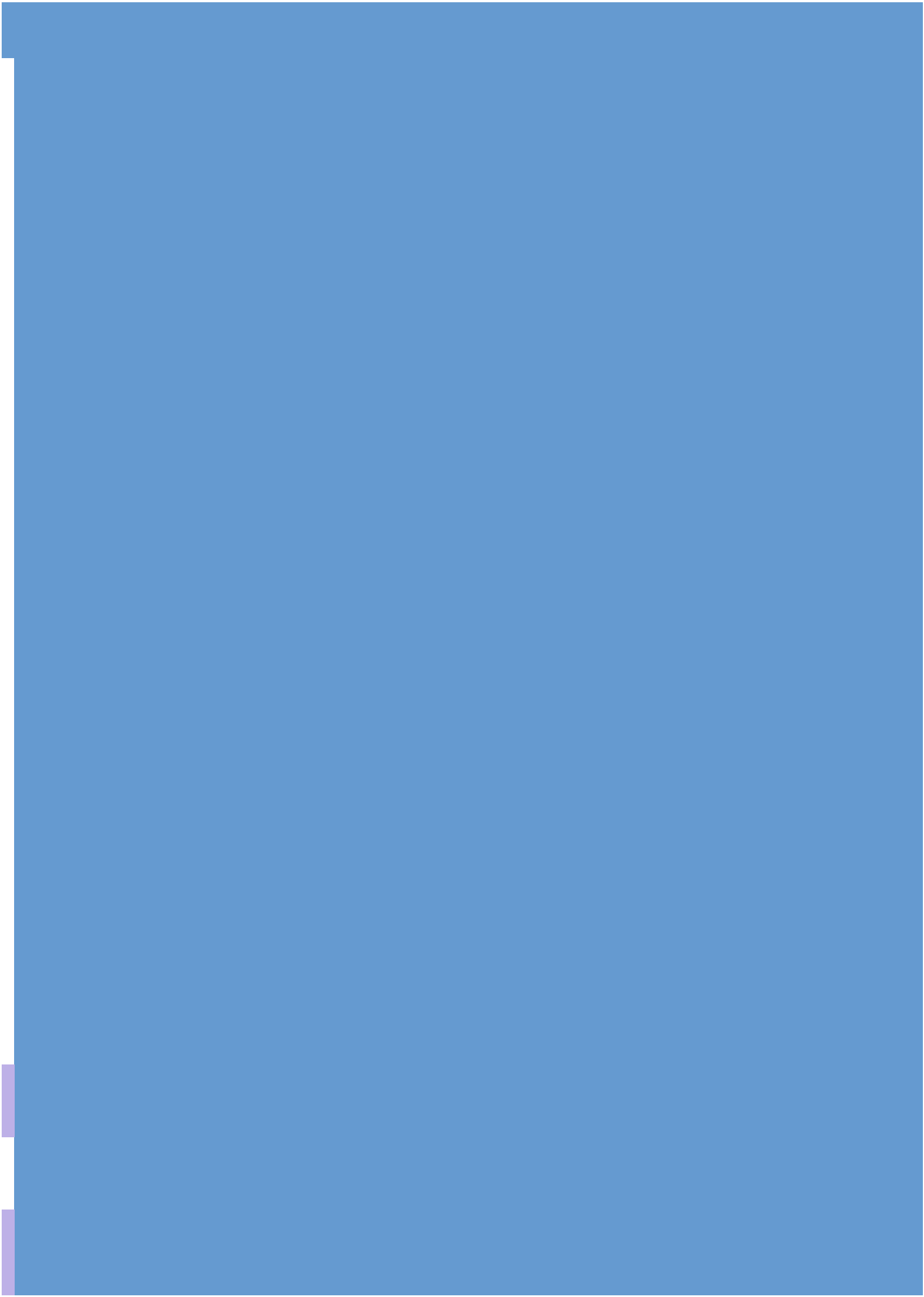
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### REMAIN ALERT TO NEW STRATEGIC ENTRY POINTS AND QUICK WINS THAT CAN PROPEL CHANGE

UN country teams need to regularly monitor and remain alert to the possibilities that can emerge from growing consensus that a particular issue requires urgent action. Tracking systems can help quickly identify strategic entry points and quick wins that can propel broader processes of change. These moments can provide opportunities to galvanize States, UN agencies, civil society groups, donors and others around common goals.

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**UNITED  
NATIONS  
DEVELOPMENT  
GROUP**

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The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) unites the 32 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments and offices that play a role in development. Since 2008, the UNDG has been one of the three pillars of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations system.

At the regional level, six Regional UNDG Teams play a critical role in driving UNDG priorities by supporting UN Country Teams with strategic priority setting, analysis and advice.

At the country level, 130 UN Country Teams serving 164 countries and territories work together to increase the synergies and joint impact of the UN system.

The UN Development Operations Coordination Office (UN DOCO) is the secretariat of the UNDG, bringing together the UN development system to promote change and innovation to deliver together on sustainable development.