



A Practical Guide for NGO Participants

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL



UNITED NATIONS



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

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Welcome to the United Nations Human Rights Council. This Guide, produced by OHCHR, is intended to facilitate and support your work. We hope you will find it useful.

For the most up to date information and advice, please refer to:



<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/ngo.htm>

You are also invited to consult Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society. This is a user-friendly guide on how to engage with United Nations human rights mandates and mechanisms. It includes best practice examples, key contacts and identifies areas of civil society and OHCHR collaboration. The Handbook in UN official languages may be ordered from publications@ohchr.org and accessed on-line at :



<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/PublicationsResources/Pages/HumanRightsBasics.aspx>



Introduction

What is the Human Rights Council?

The Human Rights Council is the principal United Nations intergovernmental body responsible for human rights. It is composed of 47 Member States, which meets in at least three sessions per year in Geneva, Switzerland.

Its role includes strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe, and making recommendations to address violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the secretariat for the Human Rights Council.



How does it work?

Elected for three-year terms, Member States of the Council discuss, take action and pass resolutions related to various items of a standing agenda:

1. Organizational and procedural matters
2. Annual report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the UN Secretary-General
3. Promotion and protection of all human rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development
4. Human rights situations that require the Council's attention
5. Human rights bodies and mechanisms
6. Universal Periodic Review
7. Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories
8. Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
9. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
10. Technical assistance and capacity-building

The Council considers the activities of its subsidiary human rights mandates and mechanisms, and may organize panel discussions and special events to enhance dialogue and mutual understanding on specific issues.

Outside its normal sessions, the Council may also hold special sessions related to country-specific or thematic issues.

In addition to Member States of the Council, Observers, which include non-Member States, inter-governmental organizations, national human



rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), may participate in a session.

The Council's sessions are broadcast live via webcast. Past sessions are archived.

How to participate in a session of the Council?

Only NGOs in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can be accredited to participate in the Human Rights Council's sessions as Observers.

As Observers, NGOs are able, amongst other things, to:

- ▶ Attend and observe all proceedings of the Council with the exception of the Council deliberations under the Complaints Procedure
- ▶ Submit written statements to the Human Rights Council
- ▶ Make oral interventions to the Human Rights Council
- ▶ Participate in debates, interactive dialogues, panel discussions and informal meetings
- ▶ Organize "parallel events" on issues relevant to the work of the Human Rights Council





Accreditation



An NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC planning to attend a session of the Human Rights Council must send a letter of request for accreditation to the Secretariat. The letter should be sent well in advance of the relevant session and at least two weeks in advance if visa attestations are required.

The letter must contain the following elements:

- ▶ Submitted on the official letterhead of the organization;
- ▶ State the title and duration of the session the organization wishes to attend, e.g. “[Name of NGO], in consultative status with ECOSOC, wishes to send the following members to attend the *X*th session of the Human Rights Council (dates of session)...”;
- ▶ List the name/s (FAMILY NAME, First name) of the person/s who will represent the organization at the session. Names of persons must appear exactly as they appear in their passports;
- ▶ List the name(s) of those members already in possession of a valid identity badge issued by UNOG Security and Safety Section, and who plan to attend the Council session, with an indication that the person(s) hold(s) an annual badge.
- ▶ The letter must be signed by the President, or Chief Executive Officer of the organization, or the organization’s Main Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva if he/she is so authorized.

Please send the letter of request for accreditation by fax to the Human Rights Council Secretariat:

Prior to the session: +41-22-917-9011

During the session: +41-22-917-0494

- ▶ NGOs in need of ‘attestation of accreditation’ for Swiss visa application purposes, should state this explicitly in the letter of request for accreditation. Please consult Swiss consular officials in your country regarding visa application deadlines, apply accordingly and ensure documentation is in order. Please note



that visa attestations are issued by the United Nations Office at Geneva. If a visa attestation is required, please also send a copy of the letter to the United Nations Office at Geneva NGO Liaison Officer to:

Fax: +41 22 917 05 83

E-mail: ungeneva.ngoliaison@unog.ch

Please Note: When there is a large number of NGOs seeking to participate in a session, the Secretariat may limit the number of accredited participants per NGO delegation with access to the plenary room. Please indicate in your accreditation request whether you seek access to the plenary, the public gallery (see also below) or a parallel event (see also below).

Attending the Session



The Human Rights Council meets in Room XX (Room 20), Palais des Nations, United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland.

NGO representatives must obtain a photo identity badge upon arrival at the United Nations and before attending the session at:

Palais des Nations - Security entrance

Pregny Gate, 8 - 14 Avenue de la Paix

1211 Geneva 10

Open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Upon presentation of an identity document (i.e. a passport) and a copy of the letter of request for accreditation from the concerned NGO a photo identity badge valid for the duration of the Council session will be issued.

NGO representatives in possession of an annual or temporary photo identity badge issued by UNOG Security and Safety Section, and valid for the duration of the session, will have access to the conference rooms.

All travel related-expenses, accommodation and medical insurance are the responsibility of the NGO or its representatives.



Access to the Public Gallery



A limited number of seats in the Public Gallery, above the main conference room, Room XX, are available for persons (e.g. students and academics), wishing to observe proceedings without being accredited as participants. Access to the public gallery will be granted to individuals or groups depending on the availability of seating and other circumstances.

Requests should be sent by email to hrcaccreditation@ohchr.org 24 hours in advance with the following information:

- ▶ Date and purpose of the visit;
- ▶ Full names of those wishing to attend (if more than five persons, please use an Excel spreadsheet).

Submitting Written Statements



NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC (General, Special or Roster status) may submit written statements to the Human Rights Council.

NGOs in general consultative status may submit written statements of up to 2,000 words. NGOs in special consultative status and on the roster may submit written statements of up to 1,500 words.

The written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) as received (English, French or Spanish) from the submitting NGO. NGOs assume full responsibility for the content of their statements, which should fully uphold UN standards and avoid abusive language.

The deadline for written statements is normally two weeks prior to the session.

The submission form can be downloaded at:



<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/ngo.htm>



Checklist before submitting the form:

- ✓ Contact information for representatives submitting written statements (name, mobile, email).
- ✓ Standing Agenda item number (1-10) of statement.
- ✓ NGO's name as it appears in the ECOSOC NGO database, indicating consultative status in brackets (General, Special, or Roster).
- ✓ For a joint statement, names of co-sponsoring ECOSOC NGOs as in the ECOSOC database with status (in brackets). Consult: <http://csonet.org/>
- ✓ List all non-ECOSOC NGOs supporting the statement (which will appear as a footnote to the statement title).
- ✓ Note the statement title in the original language of the statement.
- ✓ Statement to be in MS WORD document format (Font Times New Roman 10) and copied and pasted into the form.
- ✓ Use the tool Word Count. Length of text (including footnotes/endnotes): and report number in designated area.
 - NGOs in General consultative status: 2,000 words
 - NGOs in Special consultative status and on the Roster: 1,500 words
- ✓ Must use Spell/grammar check.
- ✓ Different language versions of one statement should be pasted in separate forms but should be sent in the same email.
- ✓ All Submissions are final, and no changes will be made afterwards.
- ✓ Email form to: hrcngo@ohchr.org



Request to Make an Oral Statement ¹



Accredited NGOs wishing to make an oral statement should submit a request using the online form. Requests should be submitted as of 8 am Geneva, Switzerland time, first day of the session

 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/ngo.htm>

Secretariat staff is available to assist, with laptops outside Room XX as of 8am, first day of the session, at Palais des Nations, Geneva.

In general, the lists of speakers are determined on the basis of requested priorities at 8am on the first day of the session, when the request was made, the number of requests received per speaking slot, and the time allocated under the Programme of Work (subject to adjustment due to time management).

Please note that speaking slots are very limited for Panels and Interactive Dialogues, and not all that sign up for these may be able to speak.

- ▶ All NGOs must confirm their registration as well as the name of the speaker in person at the List of Speakers Desk in Room XX 24 hours preceding the relevant meeting.
- ▶ Where the speaker is not from the inscribing NGO, an authorized representative from the latter must authorize this in writing.
- ▶ To take the floor, NGO speakers should use the two conference-table seats reserved for that purpose.
- ▶ Please note that to facilitate the work of Conference Services, including interpreters, 25 copies of the oral statement should be provided to Conference Officers, seated at the back of the plenary room, half an hour prior to commencing the NGO list of speakers on a specific agenda item or sub-item. The Secretariat reserves the right to move the NGO speaker/s to the end of the list, if copies are not available on time.

¹ This excludes oral statements under the Universal Periodic Review segment. Modalities for this will be circulated by the Secretariat prior to this segment.



- ▶ Photocopiers are available outside the Secretariat offices, behind Room XX. Copies of NGO oral statements may be placed on the tables at the back of the plenary room only after delivery of the statement, and must clearly indicate the logo and full name of the NGO(s) that delivered the statement.
- ▶ To co-sponsor a statement please download and submit the Co-Sponsor form:

 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/ngo.htm>

Speaking modalities for Members and Observers, including NGOs:

Panels	See modalities posted on the HRC Extranet.
Interactive Dialogues with Special Procedures Mandate-Holders	Interventions should relate to reports under consideration or to the mandate and work of the relevant Special Procedures mandate-holder(s).
Interactive Dialogue with High Commissioner for Human Rights	Interventions should relate to reports under consideration, the High Commissioner's updates or to the mandate and work of the High Commissioner.
General Debates	Interventions should relate to the Agenda Item under consideration.



Organizing a Parallel Event



Accredited NGOs may organize parallel events of relevance to the work of the Human Rights Council. Rooms will be allocated according to their availability, and should be requested on-line at:

 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/ngo.htm>

The indicative deadline for requests is two weeks prior to the start of a session. Requests are processed in priority, subject to availability of rooms.

NGO public parallel events are listed, with those organized by States or other entities, in the daily Bulletin of Informal Meetings.

To co-sponsor an NGO parallel event please download and submit the Co-Sponsor form:

 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/ngo.htm>

- ▶ The NGO organizing the parallel event is requested to provide the Secretariat with a complete list of its guests **in Excel format**, with the first name in one column and the family name in a second column, at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. Persons who are invited only to take part in parallel events should present an identity document at Pregny Gate of Palais des Nations to receive a badge, which is valid only for the duration of the parallel event.
- ▶ NGO parallel events are public meetings, unless otherwise indicated by the organizers, and may be attended by NGOs, Permanent Mission Representatives, UN Staff and other persons with access to Palais des Nations.
- ▶ Relevant NGO material can be made available inside the parallel event room, with the agreement of the organizing NGO. Any remaining documentation should be removed by the organizing NGO at the end of the meeting.
- ▶ Interpretation for NGOs' parallel events is not provided by the United Nations. NGOs may bring their own interpreters, if they so wish, and in order to do so, inform the Secretariat ahead of time.



- ▶ Visual recording by accredited NGO delegates is permitted during a parallel event with the approval of the event organizers and upon written notification to the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council, subject to the following:
 - Chair of the meeting should inform the participants at the start of the meeting that it is being recorded; and
 - Photography (still and/or video) should not interfere with the sight-lines of other delegates or disrupt the proceedings of the meeting. Tripods should be erected at the sides or the back of the room.

Documentation and Resources



Copies of all official documents issued by the United Nations, and other documentation relating to the Council's work, such as Human Rights Council reports, NGO written statements, Agenda, Annotated Agenda, Order of the Day, and Bulletin of Informal Meetings may be collected at the documentation desk at Door 40 of Palais des Nations.

All the aforementioned documents as well as advance copies of Council reports are also available electronically through the Council webpage:



<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/>

Other documents, such as daily programme updates, draft resolutions as tabled, copies of oral statements delivered by States and other stakeholders, can be found on the Human Rights Council Extranet (known as HRC Extranet), accessible through the Council webpage (see link above).

Daily programme updates may be received through the Secretariat's Twitter account:



www.twitter.com/un_hrc
(need to register on www.twitter.com)

Daily programme updates are also accessible through SMS Alert service (need to register through HRC Extranet, main page).



Other important information



NGO Briefings

- ▶ NGO briefings take place, usually on a weekly basis, with the Human Rights Council President and Secretariat. Information about these meetings is published in the Bulletin of Informal Meetings.

Access to United Nations premises and the plenary room (Room XX)

- ▶ Palais des Nations is accessible to accredited NGO delegates from 8 a.m.
- ▶ Participants must comply with the requests and instructions of United Nations officials and security staff relating to access and use of United Nations facilities and premises.
- ▶ Participants must display their badge visibly at all times when entering and exiting, and while present on United Nations premises.
- ▶ Participants may be subjected to security scrutiny. Access to the United Nations premises with large luggage is not permitted.
- ▶ On occasions of increased demand for participation in a given Human Rights Council meeting, the Secretariat may limit the number of accredited participants per NGO delegation having access to the plenary room. In lieu, any additional NGO participants not being given access to the plenary will have access to the public gallery, or alternate arrangements will be made.
- ▶ Smoking is not permitted in the Palais des Nations. Eating and drinking are not permitted in the plenary and parallel event meeting rooms.
- ▶ Use of visual recording equipment is not permitted in Palais des Nations, except within NGO parallel events (see above).

Media areas

- ▶ NGOs are not permitted to hold press conferences in UN premises. Press briefings, and dissemination of press releases and media advisories by NGOs may be arranged only through the Association of Correspondents Accredited to the United Nations (ACANU), acanu.secretary@gmail.com.



NGO materials

- ▶ NGO material (leaflets, publications, boards, banners, etc) relevant to the work of the Council may be displayed only on the tables and boards clearly marked for this purpose (outside plenary room XX). Materials should clearly indicate the logo and full name of the NGO in ECOSOC consultative status.
- ▶ Distribution of NGO material in the Palais des Nations is not permitted, including in the cafeteria and Serpentine Bar, and other public spaces.
- ▶ Copies of NGO oral statements already delivered (only) may be placed on tables in the back of the plenary room.
- ▶ Materials containing abusive or offensive language or images are not permitted on United Nations premises.

Use of the United Nations emblem

- ▶ Use of the United Nations emblem on non-official documents and publications, including NGO material is expressly prohibited.
- ▶ The United Nations flag may not be displayed in meeting rooms where NGOs organize events, except with the authorization of the Secretary-General, requested through the Secretariat.

Contact us

For further information or assistance, please access the link:

 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/ngo.htm>

You may also contact the NGO Liaison Team of the Human Rights Council Secretariat during sessions behind Room XX.

Civil society updates relating to UN mandates and mechanisms may be accessed via:

 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/CivilSociety.aspx>

OHCHR's Civil Society Section can be contacted at:

 civilsociety@ohchr.org

