

## Universal Periodic Review input for the High-level Political Forum 2023

This document responds to the 5 December 2022 letter of invitation from the President of ECOSOC to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide inputs to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2023. It draws on the outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) human rights mechanism over the preceding years to present messages and updates for consideration at the HLPF and SDG Summit.

*Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit.*

- Partnerships and means of implementation are critical to fast-tracking the SDGs and ensuring achievement of the 2030 Agenda. To this end, the SDG Summit could draw attention to the following transformative actions: developing a [human rights-enhancing economy](#), ensuring the use of maximum available resources, such as taxes, Official Development Assistance and debt relief, for the fulfilment of human rights obligations, such as social protection, critical in addressing the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 and ongoing financial, food and fuel crises. The UPR secretariat is partnering with Member States and NGOs through seminars to emphasise this nexus between human rights and the economy in its recommendations and follow-up;
- As the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) embarked on its 4<sup>th</sup> cycle from November 2022, it highlights among its successes 100% Member State participation since 2008. The HLPF and notably the SDG Summit could reinforce their own considerable political legitimacy and reach by aligning their work with UPR outcomes, notably given that 76% of supported recommendations are linked to the SDGs and can thus accelerate SDG implementation;
- Such alignment could take the form of the Political Declaration calling for, and subsequent HLPF processes delivering on, strengthening linkages between the Voluntary National Reviews and UPR outcomes. This can manifest both institutionally, on cooperation between human rights and development actors in-country, as well as substantively, connecting development policy to international human rights norms referenced in the UPR process. [The Human Rights and Voluntary National Reviews: Operational Common Approach Guidance Note](#), developed by the UN System under the Call to Action for Human Rights, shares concrete practices and assistance regarding the latter. This linkage could be further reinforced through synchronising the cycles of UPR and VNR reporting and follow-up;
- Concrete connections to UPR recommendations would support and guide national efforts to achieve sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda while assuring the fulfilment of human rights obligations and leaving no one behind, including through contributing to reversing development losses from the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17...(and)...Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed*

The 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> UPR Working Group sessions in 2022, held in hybrid modalities, included COVID-19 references in statements and recommendations from States under Review and other Member States. References to the SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 of specific focus at the 2023 HLPF encompassed the following:-

- Government partial payments of water and electricity bills, and reduced electricity network connection costs;
- The donation of almost 13.5 million doses of vaccines to 22 countries, mainly in South-East Asia, the Balkans and in countries of the Eastern Partnership;
- Efforts made towards the creation of an international instrument relating to pandemics;
- Encouraging stronger international cooperation to meet various challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Recommendations asking States under Review to seek the international community's support to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines for all people;
- Recommendations to tap into financing opportunities for progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.*

- Government promotion of universal access to social security through the national social security system, reviews of all social security benefits, complementary aid on social assistance, broadening the right to unemployment benefits, allowances for technical unemployment and partial unemployment;
- The implementation of several laws and regulations leading to a reduction in poverty levels in the post-pandemic period, and monthly vouchers to provide basic commodities to vulnerable members of society;
- Adopting a strategic plan to achieve a comprehensive health insurance coverage system, universal health insurance, and a universal free-of-charge public health system, and an estimated 88 per cent of one country's population covered by a universal health-care system, up from 67 per cent in 2017;
- Alternative learning platforms to facilitate teaching and learning, allowances for parents staying home with children for online education, programmes to actively search for students who had been left out of the education system, a plan to improve the educational infrastructure, a scholarship fund, and transfers to local governments to buy distance-learning equipment for schoolchildren and teachers;
- Electronic cash transfer programme benefitting women; recommendations to continue the efforts made towards the total eradication of female genital mutilation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic; minimizing the societal effects of COVID-19 quarantine measures, in part to reduce the risk of gender-based violence and other human rights abuses; and a specialized national programme for the prevention of domestic violence and provision of assistance to victims.

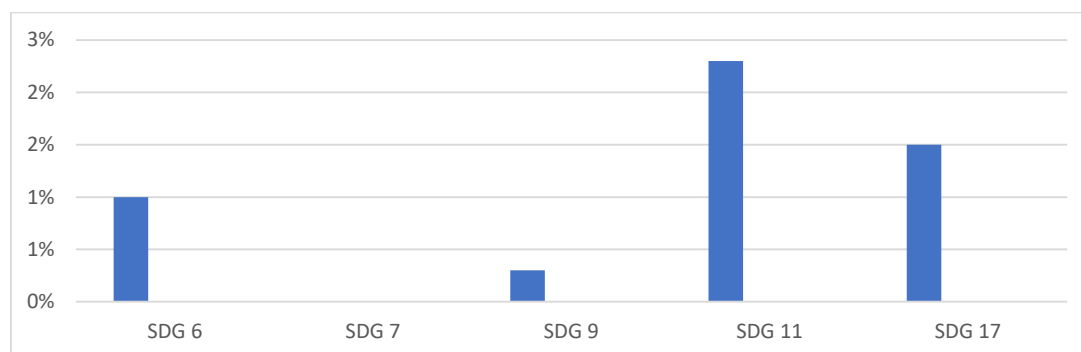
*Assessment of the situation in the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.*

The UPR secretariat is not in a position to provide a definitive substantive assessment, given its function as a facilitator of State-to-State peer reviews, and in light of the limited coverage of the focus SDGs for 2023 (see Annex). However, review of the Member State statements indicates trends towards growing recognition of the role of social protection, financing and cooperation, and of the realization of the rights of specific groups such as women, children (notably on education) and migrants, in taking forward COVID-19 lessons towards building a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable post-pandemic order that leaves no one behind. The above key messages are thus offered.

## ANNEX

For the period covering the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the UPR from May 2017 to January 2022, 76% of recommendations enjoyed the support of the States under review. Out of the supported recommendations, 76% were linked to the SDGs or SDG targets.

With specific reference to the 2023 HLPF themes, for the 40<sup>th</sup> UPR Working Group session in January 2022 for which the latest data is available, 1% were linked to SDG 6, 0% (2 recommendations) to SDG 7, 0.3% to SDG 9, 2.3% to SDG 11 and 1.5% to SDG 17.<sup>1</sup> These percentages are depicted in the chart below.



**Percentage of UPR recommendations in WG40 linked to SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17**

### UPR TOOLS

The UPR secretariat has developed [country-specific tools to facilitate States in linking human rights recommendations and the SDGs](#):-

- Letters from the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Foreign Minister of each Member State once its UPR outcome is adopted in the Human Rights Council;
- Matrices of thematically clustered recommendations for each country, linked to relevant SDGs and targets, starting with those accepted by the State;
- Infographics providing trends between second and third cycle and linking human rights mechanisms' recommendations with the top five SDGs.

Tools are also available for other stakeholders:

- The [UPR Practical Guidance](#) for Heads of UN Offices worldwide;
- The [Repository of UN good practices](#) on how the UPR supports sustainable development, which notably concluded that “UNCTs and UN entities can use the UPR process as a practical problem solving tool to address sensitive issues and priority challenges such as climate change and the response to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 pandemic” (p. 12) – see examples from Albania, Bangladesh and Nepal;
- [Tips for engagement at country level for National Human Rights Institutions and NGOs](#);
- [Tips for Members of Parliament](#).

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<sup>1</sup> \*Data drawn from the Universal Human Rights Index on 16 January 2023 <https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/>