Universal Periodic Review input for the 2024 High-level Political Forum

This document responds to the 30 October 2023 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 2024. It draws on the outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council over the preceding year to present messages and updates for consideration at the HLPF.

Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the 2024 HLPF Ministerial Declaration:

- With the HLPF and Summit of the Future both being held in 2024, at a time of heightened crises, attention can usefully turn to solutions based on strategic prioritization and systems thinking, with particular reference to SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 as they relate to economic, social and cultural rights, notably addressing economic inequality (SDG target 10.4), and through the concept of the human rights economy;
- The UPR secretariat reiterates the value of strengthening linkages between the Voluntary National Reviews and 2030 Agenda implementation and UPR recommendations. We encourage institutional cooperation between human rights and development actors in-country, and the integration into development policy of international human rights norms referenced in the UPR process. Such linkages will enhance policy coherence, and reduce the reporting burden for countries;
- Also significant are the establishment and strengthening of National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up, and national recommendations tracking databases, to ensure fuller engagement, transparency and efficiency (e.g. identifying responsible staff, budgets, and timelines) in translating UPR recommendations, many of which are linked to SDGs, into concrete change and SDG progress on the ground.

Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body[i].

- With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, States reported experiencing significant economic and social rights impacts, including increased poverty, unemployment, and external debt, food security challenges, growing discrimination such as antisemitic conspiracy theories, a rise in trafficking involving children, as well as impacts on freedoms, such as restrictions on movement, assembly, and privacy, while the administration of justice was curtailed, for example with a corrections commission unable to perform unannounced inspections or delays in the judicial system;
- In terms of the impact of climate change, States noted that catastrophic hurricanes, floods, and landslides, resulted in the deaths of thousands of individuals, significant displacement, economic and property damage, and loss or hampering of livelihoods for millions, also triggering a reallocation of resources to address immediate needs;
- With regard to conflicts, the war in Ukraine presented the challenge of accommodating Ukrainian refugees for one State, including granting access to the labour market, while other States highlighted that terrorist attacks had resulted in widespread loss of life;
- Regarding the global economic and financial crisis, this prompted prioritizing economic and financial issues, including discussions for debt restructuring, while inflation affected the financing of national school feeding initiatives and related employment;
- The inter-linked nature of the crises and their impacts was also referenced, with, for example, terrorism, transnational organized crime, and the COVID-19 pandemic reported as leading to economic decline, increased inequality and inflation, and widespread impacts across various sectors.

Three key areas where sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.[ii]

- State national reports noted examples of the **digitalisation of public services** to counter corruption (SDG target 16.5), while also increasing efficiency and expanding the access to services. Efforts encompassed online e-service platforms, birth and death registration through software, mobiles and hybrid modalities, electronic identity cards, databases to track SDG implementation, a smart map of nature capital to inform land use and policy decisions, a genetic databank to identify victims of violence, digitalizing archives, criminal records and case law, and a digital case management system for referrals on child protection;
- **National dialogue platforms** in some States facilitated more systematic participation of key stakeholders in decision-making (SDG target 16.7), particularly indigenous peoples and children, contributing to the formulation of legislative amendments, new public policies, or important discussions on issues such as gender-based violence, discrimination, privacy and security. Initiatives included a Leave No One Behind tool to ensure involvement in legislative processes, annual human rights dialogues, and frameworks for consultations with indigenous peoples, notably on mining projects;
- **The adoption of legislation on mandatory quota systems** in a number of States also served to counter discrimination (SDG target 16.b). This ensured a minimal level of representation of women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and young persons, in Parliaments, local and national political positions, political parties, public sector educational institutions, civil service, private companies, and regarding access to land.

Three examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.

The UPR secretariat supports the Political Declaration commitments to action to combat inequalities within and among countries and pursue policies that stem the tide of rising inequality, including through **social protection systems** and universal health coverage (para. 37). It also endorses full implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including fulfilling Official Development Assistance commitments, improving international debt mechanisms, **combating illicit financial flows**, and reforming the international financial architecture, an inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system, measures of progress beyond Gross Domestic Product, and **international tax cooperation** (para. 38). The emerging concept of a human rights economy particularly draws attention to the international human rights law framework that underpins these commitments, and the secretariat would highlight the significant impact of policies on social protection systems, combating illicit financial flows, and international tax cooperation.
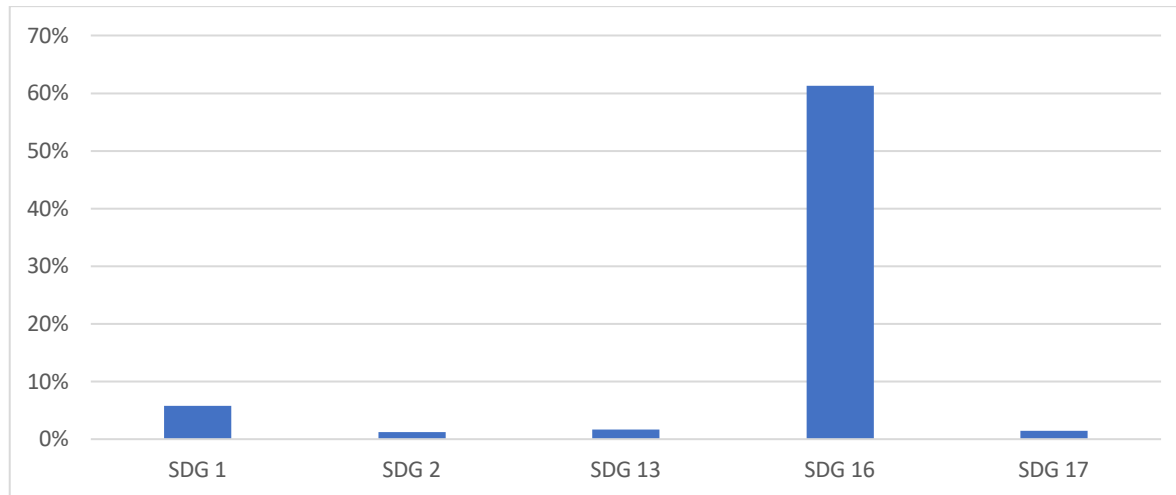
Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit.

The UPR secretariat is not aware of any specific discussion on the Political Declaration undertaken in the intergovernmental forum of the universal periodic review.

ANNEX

For the 42nd UPR Working Group session in 2023 for which UHRI data is available, 77% of recommendations enjoyed the support of the States under review. Out of the supported recommendations, 77% were linked to the SDGs or SDG targets[1].

With specific reference to the 2024 HLPF themes and time period, for the 42nd UPR Working Group session, 6% of UPR recommendations were linked to SDG 1, 1% to SDG 2, 2% to SDG 13, 61% to SDG 16 and 1% to SDG 17.[2] These percentages are depicted in the chart below.

Percentage of UPR recommendations in WG 42 linked to SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 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 supported/accepted by the State;
- Infographics providing country trends of the top five SDGs linked to recommendations.

Tools are also available for other stakeholders:

- "Maximizing the use of the UPR at country level -Practical Guidance" for UN actors;
- "UN Good Practices – how the UPR process supports sustainable development";
- Tips for engagement at country level for National Human Rights Institutions and NGOs;
- Tips for Members of Parliament;
- Updated UPR Civil Society Guide for the 4th cycle.

ⁱ See the National Reports of UPR WG 42 and WG43, at https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/documentation
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[1] Data drawn from the Universal Human Rights Index on 8 February 2024 https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/
[2] Data drawn from the Universal Human Rights Index on 8 February 2024 https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/.