

# Universal Periodic Review Engagement Memo

## What is the Universal Periodic Review?

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is the principal United Nations intergovernmental body responsible for human rights. Its role includes strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and making recommendations to address violations of human rights. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is the mechanism by which the HRC receives reports and provides feedback to each State approximately once every 5 years. It provides an opportunity for Member States to discuss the steps taken to protect human rights in their countries and gives an opportunity to address violations.

## How does it work?

A review of a State is based on three documents: a national report prepared by the State under review; a report prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); and a summary of information submitted by other stakeholders.

The review itself takes place in Geneva in a session of the Working Group on the UPR, which is composed of the 47-member States of the Human Rights Council. The review takes the form of a three-and-a-half-hour interactive dialogue between the State under review and the member and observer States of the Council. A few days after the interactive dialogue, the Working Group adopts the report of the proceedings.

A final outcome document, containing the report of the working group and the position of the State under review on the recommendations put forward, is adopted at the following plenary session of the Human Rights Council, a few months after the review. One hour is set aside for the adoption of each outcome. That hour is equally divided among the State under review, other States, national human rights institutions, and NGO observers to deliver oral statements commenting on the UPR review.

## How can Civil Society Participate?

Advocates can participate in the UPR process in five main forms. This list gives a brief overview of each of the five entry points, which are discussed in depth below.

- 1.) Campaign during the consultation process (at least a year before the report deadline) to have tobacco issues included in the national report that the State under review must submit to the UPR. Each government will have its own website on this topic. [hereinafter called the **State report**]
- 2.) Send information to the Office of the High Commission on the tobacco situation in the country either jointly with other civil society organizations or individually as a “stakeholder’s report”; [hereinafter called the **Stakeholder’s report**]
- 3.) Educate members of the UPR Working Group on issues relating to tobacco through individual meetings or side events. Encourage them to ask questions and make recommendations about tobacco during the review; [hereinafter called **Working Group** and **Side meetings**]
- 4.) Organizations with ECOSOC status can take the floor at the Human Rights Council during the adoption of the report to address tobacco issues specific to the country and ask the HRC to request that the government take action; [hereinafter called **HRC presentation**]
- 5.) Monitor and participate in the implementation of the UPR recommendations by the government. [hereinafter called **Monitoring**]

## Written Submissions

### 1. State report

This report is due 3 months before the hearing; however, the consultation process can go on up to a year in advance. Each state under review has their own website where they maintain information about the consultative process. Tobacco control civil society organizations should engage with their governments to encourage the state to include tobacco control status, progress, and shortcomings in its report.

### 2. Stakeholders report

The UPR process allows for civil society to give direct input through a stakeholder's report. These reports can come from NGOs with or without ECOSOC status. It is important to include statistics and information specific to tobacco control issues in your country. It is also important to highlight what your country is doing well in addition to where there is room for improvement.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has put together a helpful resource that provides both content and formatting guidelines for UPR Stakeholder Report Submissions: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/PracticalGuideCivilSociety.pdf>

Examples can also be found on ASH's website- <https://ash.org/human-rights-resources/>

## Meetings/Presentations

While submitting reports is very useful, following up a report with advocacy is the best way to ensure that tobacco control issues are considered during the UPR process.

### 1. Working Group

Only NGOs in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can be accredited to participate in the session of the Working Group as observers. Other civil society organizations are able to observe the proceedings without making oral statements. UPR Working Group sessions are broadcast live via webcast. An NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC planning to attend a session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group 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.

More details can be found here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/PracticalGuideCivilSociety.pdf>.

If your organization does not have ECOSOC status, but you are interested in engaging at this level, please let ASH know. We may be able to attend using our ECOSOC status, or work with other partners to ensure that someone attends on your behalf.

### 2. Side Meetings

NGOs may organize information meetings on the UPR process, with a view to sharing information and best practices at the country level. That will require reaching out to individuals to invite them. One strategy to consider is reaching out to the state review groups, known as "troikas", who serve as rapporteurs. The selection of the troikas for each State is done through a drawing of lots following elections for the Council membership in the General Assembly.

The list of troikas can be found here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRSessions.aspx>

### 3. Human Rights Council

Only NGOs in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can be accredited to participate in the plenary session of the Human Rights Council as observers. During the Human Rights Council session, NGOs may submit written statements, and organize parallel events. In the plenary meetings, NGOs are able to observe the proceedings and to make oral statements, provided that they are inscribed on the list of speakers and can be given the floor during the 20 minute-segment allocated to them. 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.

More information can be found here-

[http://ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/PracticalGuideNGO\\_en.pdf](http://ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/PracticalGuideNGO_en.pdf).

If your organization does not have ECOSOC status, but you are interested in engaging at this level, please let ASH know. We may be able to attend using our ECOSOC status, or work with other partners to ensure that someone attends on your behalf.

#### Monitoring

Civil society should monitor the progress of the state on the outcomes of the UPR, including when and if the country implemented new tobacco control measures and the outcomes of these programs. This data can be crucial information for the next UPR session.

#### Resources

OHCHR has released "[Technical guidelines for the submission of stakeholders](#)" as well as the [Practical Guide for Civil Society](#).

Model submissions and other guidance can be found on ASH's website-  
<https://ash.org/human-rights-resources/>