



Achieving SDGs in times of global crises



Side Event 31

Localizing SDGs and human rights through the UN Universal Periodic Review



8 JUNE 2023, 13:15 -14:15



Conference Room 6

SUMMARY

Every day local and regional governments (LRGs) enact policies to ensure that their population has access to adequate and affordable housing, to water and sanitation, that it lives in a healthy environment and that social inclusion and gender equality becomes a reality at subnational level. Every day, LRGs localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and fulfil human rights on the ground.

In doing so, LRGs should gain more visibility at the international level and showcase their important work. Cities are today more numerous to submit Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to demonstrate advancement on the implementation of SDGs at local level. Submitting VLRs enables LRGs to get a good overview of their performance on SDGs, of which opportunities exist and what investments are to be made to tackle gaps and challenges. VLRs are also important tools to reinforce local-national policy coherence on sustainable development.

In a complementary way to VLRs, LRGs could also gain increased international visibility for their work on SDGs through the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR is an international mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council that involves a periodic and well-structured review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States.¹ As an outcome, States are provided with numerous recommendations to improve their human rights situation that are to be implemented, once States accept them. Many recommendations involve issues that are of concern to LRGs: housing, water and sanitation, health, education, non-discrimination, gender equality, etc.

While the UPR is focused on human rights, it also addresses SDGs. Indeed, human rights and SDGs are closely interlinked.² The SDGs seek to realize the human rights of all and over 90% of the SDGs and their targets correspond to human rights obligations. As such, LRGs' participation in the UPR could help showcase their achievements on SDGs and human rights.

¹ Guidance by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights specifically refers to the importance for States to engage LRGs in the Universal Periodic Review, see p. 3 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/4thCycle-Guidance-Note-National-Report-EN.pdf>.

² See the infographics developed by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for each UN Member State, linking UPR Recommendations to the corresponding SDGs, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/documentation>. See also "UN good practices: How the UPR supports sustainable development", a joint publication by OHCHR, UNDP, UN Development Coordination Office, February 2022, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/UPR_good_practices_2022.pdf





UN-HABITAT

ASSEMBLY

5 to 9 June 2023

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The participation of LRGs in the UPR stands at the heart of the coalition launched in 2021 by the Geneva Cities Hub, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Habitat, the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, UPR Info and the Geneva Human Rights Platform. The coalition seeks to involve LRGs in UPR to garner support for human rights at all levels of government and enhance their implementation on the ground.

The proposed side-event pursues the **following objectives**:

- Introduce the UPR as a mechanism that addresses issues of concern to LRGs and that helps LRGs localize the SDGs.
- Share a Mannheim and Nakuru's experience on their Voluntary Local Reviews and describe how this could be used in the UPR process.
- Explain how LRGs can take part in the UPR and contribute to the implementation of the UPR recommendations, in cooperation with States and UN entities.
- Address the benefits that exist for States, if they include LRGs in the UPR.
- Showcase the work of UN Habitat on linking the localization of SDGs with human rights.

Organizer(s)

Geneva Cities hub, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, UN Habitat, UPR Info, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva Human Rights Platform (see below).

Moderator

Anh Thu Duong, Co-Director, Geneva Cities Hub

Speaker(s)

Melanie Grabowy, Deputy Mayor, City of Bonn, Germany

Gitau Thabanja, City Manager, Nakuru City, Kenya

Robert Lewis-Lettington, Chief of Section, Land, Housing and Shelter, UN Habitat



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