

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
A Practical Guide for NGO Participants



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHCHR

Table of contents

Background	2
Accreditation	3
Attending the Session	4
Access to the Public Gallery	4
Submitting Written Statements	4
Requesting a Room for a Parallel-Event	5
Requesting to Make an Oral Statement	5
Documentation and Resources	6
Participation in General	7
Contact Us	8

Welcome to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The information in this hand-out is intended to facilitate and support your work. We hope you will find this useful.

Background

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 addressing violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, the promotion of respect for human rights for all, and effective coordination and mainstreaming of human rights within the UN system.

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

During a given session the Council considers the activities of its subsidiary human rights procedures 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 also 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 and
- Organize “parallel events” on issues relevant to the work of the Human Rights Council

Accreditation

An NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC interested in attending the 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, particularly where 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 *Xth* session of the HRC (dates of session)...";
- List the name/s (FAMILY NAME, First name) of the person/s who will represent the organization at the HRC session. Names of persons must appear exactly as they appear in their passports;
- For those organizations in need of 'attestation of accreditation' for Swiss visa application purposes, NGOs should explicitly indicate their need in the letter. The HRC Secretariat will accordingly transmit the request to the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) NGO Liaison Office which will issue the attestation and transmit it to the concerned NGO headquarters. Please consult Swiss consular officials in your country regarding visa application deadlines, apply accordingly and ensure documentation is in order;
- 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 in scanned or in PDF format by email: [Subject line: NGO Accreditation letter for HRC session] to:

hrcaccreditation@ohchr.org or by fax to: +41-22-917-9011.

Please Note: On occasions of increased demand for participation in a given session, the Secretariat may limit access to the plenary room in terms of the number of accredited participants per NGO delegation.

Attending the Session

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

* Please ensure that representatives of an NGO already in possession of an annual or temporary badge issued by UNOG Security and Safety Section, who plan to attend, are also included in the accreditation request.

All representatives of organizations must obtain a photo identity badge upon their 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

Upon presentation of an identity document (i.e. a passport) a photo identity badge valid for the duration of the Council session will be issued. NGO representatives are advised to take a copy of the letter of accreditation (above) sent by the concerned NGO.

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 arrangements 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 wishing to observe the proceedings of the HRC without being accredited as participants (e.g. students and academics).

Access to the public gallery will be granted depending on the availability of seating and other circumstances.

Individuals or groups who wish to attend are required to email hrcaccreditation@ohchr.org (24 hours before the desired date) with the following information:

- Date of the visit;
- Purpose of the visit; and
- Full names of those wishing to attend.

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

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

The deadline for written statements is normally two weeks prior to the start of a session in order for the documents to be available at the start.

The submission form can be downloaded at:

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

Checklist before submitting the form:

- Contact information for representative submitting written statement (i.e. name, mobile, email).
- Agenda item of statement.
- Your organization's name as it appears in the ECOSOC NGO database and indicate consultative status in brackets (i.e. General, Special, or Roster).
- For joint statement, list of co-sponsoring ECOSOC NGO as it appears in the ECOSOC database and status (in brackets).
- List of non-ECOSOC NGO supporting the statement (will appear as a footnote to the statement title).
- Statement title (in original language).
- Statement is in MS WORD document format (Font Times New Roman 10).
- Check word count. Length of text (including footnotes/endnotes):
 - NGOs in General consultative status: 2,000 words
 - NGOs in Special consultative status and on the Roster: 1,500 words
- Spell/grammar check.
- Different language versions of one statement should be pasted in separate forms and sent in the same email.
- Submissions are final.
- Email form to: hrcngo@ohchr.org

Requesting a Room for 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.

Requests for rooms are made on-line:

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

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

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

Requesting to Make an Oral Statement *

Accredited NGOs should make requests for oral statements using the online form (as of 8am Geneva, Switzerland time, first day of the session):

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

For those needing assistance to fill in the online form, Secretariat staff will be available with laptops outside Room XX (or Rm. 20) 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).

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

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 25 copies of the oral statement should be made available to Conference Services before delivering the statement. Conference Services staff can be approached at the back of the plenary room. Photocopiers are available outside the Secretariat offices, behind Room XX. Copies of NGO oral statements may be placed by NGOs on the tables at the back of the plenary room only after delivery of the relevant 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 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.

Documentation and Resources

Copies of the Agenda, Annotated Agenda, Order of the Day, Bulletin of Informal Meetings, Council reports, NGO written statements may be picked up at the documentation desk at door 40 of the Palais des Nations.

Links to documentation and resources related to the work of the Council, such as the Programme of Work, Agenda, Annotated Agenda, Order of the Day, Bulletin of Informal Meetings, Council reports, NGO written statements, and webcast service can be found here:

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

Information on daily programme updates, draft documentation, copies of oral statements as delivered by States and other stakeholders, and draft resolutions, etc. can be found at the HRC Extranet accessible through the link above. You can also stay informed through Twitter (www.twitter.com/un_hrc) and our SMS alert service (free subscription available through the Extranet).

Please also consult the *Handbook for Civil Society*, available at:

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

Participation in General

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 side-event meeting rooms.
- Use of visual recording equipment is not permitted in Palais des Nations, except within NGO parallel events meetings (see below).

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 (e.g. leaflets, publications, boards, banners, etc) that is relevant to the work of the Council may be posted or displayed only on the tables and boards clearly marked for this purpose (i.e. outside plenary room XX).
- Distribution of NGO material elsewhere in the Palais des Nations is not permitted, including in the cafeteria and Serpentine Bar, and other public spaces.
- Inside the plenary room, only copies of delivered oral statements are permitted and should be placed on tables in the back of the room.

- Materials containing abusive or offensive language or images are not permitted on United Nations premises.
- Material for display should clearly indicate the logo and full name of the NGO in ECOSOC consultative status.

Parallel events

- NGO parallel events are public meetings, unless otherwise indicated by the organizers; as such, they may be attended by all NGOs, Permanent Mission Representatives, UN Staff and other persons with access to Palais des Nations.
- Inside the parallel event room relevant NGO material can be made available 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 Secretariat of the Human Rights Council, subject to the following guidelines:
 - 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.

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

The Civil Society Section of the OHCHR is here to help and to facilitate constructive participation of NGOs in the work of the Human Rights Council.

For further information or assistance, please don't hesitate to contact the NGO Liaison Team of the Human Rights Council Secretariat at civilsocietyunit@ohchr.org.

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

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