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|  | **UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)** | **SPECIAL PROCEDURES (SPs)** | **TREATY BODIES (TBs)** | **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC)** |
| **What is their scope?** | **Countries**: The UPR reviews the entire human rights record of countries. | **Countries/topics**: SPs either monitor the human rights situation in a country or focus on human rights themes as part of a general overview. They may also consider individual cases or problematic legislation. | **Countries**: TBs review how a State has implemented its obligations that are set out in a treaty the State has ratified or acceded to. They may also consider individual complaints. | **Countries/topics**:The HRC can monitor and review any human rights issue, situation or country that its members mandate it to monitor, whether by consensus or vote. |
| **Which human rights are covered?** | **All**:All human rights are covered by the UPR. | **Some**: SPs focus either on countries or specific topics, as mandated by the Human Rights Council. | **Some**: TBs focus only on those rights that are covered by the treaty for which that TB monitors compliance. | **All**: All human rights are covered by the HRC, with particular attention to grave and systematic human rights violations. |
| **Which countries are covered?** | **All**: All countries are covered by the UPR. | **All**: Although some SPs are mandated to examine the situation in one specific country. | **Some**: TBs can only review the countries that have ratified the treaty for which that TB monitors compliance. | **All**: Although whether a particular country or human rights issue is scrutinised depends on the will of Member States of the HRC. |
| **How frequent is the monitoring?** | Every State is reviewed **every 5.5 years,** with voluntary mid-term reporting in between. | **Ongoing**: Each SP publishes at least one annual **report** on their country or topic, and on country visits conducted. They can also issue **communications** during the year, if there are serious human rights violations occurring in a country. | **Varies**: States are reviewed roughly **every** **4 years**, but usually less frequently. This is because the process depends on when a country submits information and the TB’s own backlog. If a country has agreed to this, TBs can also review **individual complaints**. | **Ongoing**: The HRC meets three times a year and discusses a wide range of human rights issues and country situations. It can adopt **resolutions**, hold **special** **sessions**, hold **dialogues** and debates, and governments can make **statements**. |
| **Can they make country visits?** | **No**: There are no country visits as part of the UPR process. | **Yes**: All SPs can go on country visits, but ‘official’ visits are only possible if the State has invited them to do so. | **Yes**: Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture can visit countries, and sometimes informal country visits are conducted as part of follow-up procedures. | **Possible**: Generally there are no country visits as part of the HRC procedures, although the HRC can request that SPs or other actors undertake visits and the HRC President may also use their ‘good offices’ to conduct visits. |
| **Who makes the recommendations?** | **States**: States make recommendations to each other. | **Experts**: An individual or small group makes recommendations primarily to States, but also to other actors, like businesses. | **Experts**: A committee of experts makes recommendations to States. | **States**: Member States of the HRC vote on what action the HRC will take to respond to a situation, and governments can make (joint) statements with their own recommendations. |
| **How authoritative are the recommendations?** | **Political**: UPR recommendations are always political because States review each other. Some can be specific, action-oriented and in line with international human rights standards, but others tend to be quite vague. States choose to accept recommendations or to simply note them, but there are no sanctions if the State fails to comply. If a State accepts a recommendation, that political commitment can be used to pressure them to act, and they will want to demonstrate to the recommending State that they have taken action. | **Expert**: The recommendations are made by independent experts, making them quite authoritative. The recommendations themselves are not binding, which means that States are only encouraged to implement them. In and of themselves, the communications from SPs may have limited influence because other States are not aware of them, but some States take them very seriously. Also, thematic reports are not targeted at any specific country, and so are considered by States to be general ‘guidance’, while country visit reports have more influence. | **Binding**: TB recommendations and their views on individual communications are authoritative statements of what States should do to implement their binding legal obligations, meaning that States must consider them in good faith and should implement them. However, there are no sanctions if States do not do so. The recommendations are usually framed in legal language and can be very specific. States have agreed to be bound by the recommendations by ratifying the treaty, but the political pressure to comply is primarily at the national level. | **Political**: The resolutions and decisions of the HRC – as well as government statements – are not legally binding, but do contain strong political commitments. States that have sponsored or co-sponsored resolutions, and States that have voted in favour of those resolutions can be considered to be under greater pressure to comply with them. States that are the subject of resolutions or government statements will feel strong international political pressure to respond. |
| **How quickly does it react?** | Follows **regular cycle** of 5.5 years. | Can react **within 24 hours** on urgent cases, but can also take several **weeks**. | Frequency of **reviews depends on when States submit** information, and there is a backlog of **1.5 to 5 years for individual complaints**, although interim measures to prevent irreversible harm can be issued more quickly. | Follows **regular cycle** of sessions in March, June and September, but – if there is strong political will – can also hold **special sessions** to respond to urgent situations. |
| **How accessible is it?** | **Very**: any NGO can engage by submitting information and lobbying States from home – no ECOSOC accreditation required. | **Very**: any NGO can engage by submitting information from home – no ECOSOC accreditation required. | **Very**: any NGO can engage by submitting information – greater impact if you travel to Geneva to advocate – no ECOSOC accreditation required. | **Moderately**: any NGO can engage – hard to advocate from home – often requires the assistance of NGOs with ECOSOC accreditation (e.g. to attend sessions and make statements). |
| **How safe is it to engage?**  *This is an overview. Each defender must make their own assessment based on their circumstances and their State* | **Moderately**: information submitted by NGOs is published on the OHCHR website, and it may be difficult to lobby other States without your government becoming aware. *If national NGOs have security concerns, they can work with regional or international NGOs so that they submit information in their name and lobbies States, keeping involvement of national NGO under the radar.* | **Moderately**: names of NGOs that submit information to SPs are confidential for communications, and NGOs can request that their submissions for reports not be published on the OHCHR website. Names of victims will be shared with the State concerned, but can be redacted from communications when made public. | **Moderately**: NGOs can request that their submissions not be published on the OHCHR website, and can request private meetings with TBs. For individual complaints, all information is shared with the State. *If national NGOs have security concerns, they can work with regional or international NGOs so that they submit information in their name and advocate to the TB, keeping involvement of national NGO under the radar.* | **Moderately**: lobbying at the HRC is very public and States may take grave steps to avoid being exposed in the HRC in front of other States. *If national NGOs have security concerns, they can work with a regional or international NGO so that that organisation lobbies States in the HRC and makes statements in its name, keeping involvement of national NGO under the radar.* |