



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND  
www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9000 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: registry@ohchr.org

21 February 2022

Excellency,

I have been following the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Republic of Latvia and welcome the constructive engagement of the Government of Latvia during the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the UPR Working Group in May 2021.

As the final outcome report on the review of Latvia was recently adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 48<sup>th</sup> session, I would like to take this opportunity to follow up on a number of areas raised in the two reports that my Office had prepared for the review of Latvia – the Compilation of United Nations information and the Summary of Stakeholders' submissions – which I consider in need of particular attention over the next four and a half years, until the next cycle of the UPR. In identifying those areas, I have considered the statements and recommendations made by 87 delegations and the presentation made and responses provided by the delegation of Latvia. I have also considered the actions taken by the Government of Latvia to implement the 127 recommendations fully supported during the second cycle of the UPR. The aforementioned areas cover a range of issues, which appear in the annex to this letter.

I welcome the approval by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Plan for the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men for 2021-2023, with the reported aim to ensure integrated, targeted and effective policy in promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and men, taking into consideration, inter alia, the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to Latvia.

I further welcome the establishment of the special working group on hate crimes within the Ministry of Interior, which is reportedly mandated to assess the possible obstacles to the identification and detection of hate crimes, as well as to identify possible courses of action.

Similarly, I welcome the adoption of the Law on the Discontinuation of Non-Citizen Status for Children and encourage Latvia to intensify its efforts to find sustainable solutions to the situation of non-citizens and stateless persons, and promote and protect effectively the rights of minorities in Latvia.

/..

H.E. Mr. Edgars RINKĒVIČS  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Latvia



I encourage Latvia to develop a comprehensive national human rights action plan in order to achieve concrete results in the areas highlighted in the annex to this letter and to facilitate preparations for the fourth cycle of the UPR. My advice to all Member States is to develop and implement national action plans in close consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders, in particular the national human rights institution and all civil society organizations and, where necessary, with the support of international organizations, including my Office.

I also encourage Latvia to make further efforts to strengthen its national mechanism for comprehensive reporting and follow-up to recommendations received from all international and regional human rights mechanisms and to treaty obligations, linking them to the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, I strongly recommend the use of the OHCHR practical guide on this topic, which is available at:

[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR\\_PUB\\_16\\_1\\_NMRF\\_PracticalGuide.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_16_1_NMRF_PracticalGuide.pdf)

Please note that I am sharing my advice with all Member States as they go through the third cycle of the UPR with a view to assisting States with the implementation of the recommendations, following the review. One important measure that can positively contribute to follow-up action is voluntary mid-term reporting. Therefore, I strongly encourage all Member States to submit a voluntary mid-term report two years after the adoption of the UPR outcome report. In this regard, I encourage the Government of Latvia to consider submitting a mid-term report on follow-up to the third cycle of the review by 2023.

As stated by the Secretary-General in his 2017 report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1, paragraph 98): *“The Human Rights Council’s universal periodic review process is now entering a new cycle, with every Member State scheduled for a third round of scrutiny. We will work to strengthen the relevance, precision and impact of the Council’s recommendations, including by providing better support to Member States in implementation, stronger collaboration with United Nations country teams and the establishment of national mechanisms for human rights reporting and follow-up to link the universal periodic review to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.”*

I look forward to discussing with you ways in which my Office may assist Latvia in relation to the areas identified in this letter and its annex.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Michelle Bachelet  
High Commissioner for Human Rights

cc: H.E. Mr. Andris PELŠS  
State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Latvia

Ms. Birgit VAN HOUT  
Regional Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
OHCHR Regional Office for Europe  
Belgium

## Annex

### **Scope of international obligations and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and bodies**

- Ratifying the main United Nations human rights instruments to which Latvia is not yet a party, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- Finalizing the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the European Convention on Nationality, and the Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in relation to State Succession.
- Considering lifting Latvia's reservations to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

### **National human rights framework**

- Broadening the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman to include the promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality.

### **Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law**

#### **A. Cross-cutting issues**

##### *Equality and non-discrimination*

- Taking concrete steps to promote intercultural dialogue.
- Adopting comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that addresses direct and indirect discrimination and encompasses all the prohibited grounds of discrimination, including sexual orientation and gender identity and on the basis of disability.
- Adopting effective measures to combat racism, racial discrimination and other related forms of intolerance, including that against the Roma people.
- Enhancing efforts to prevent, investigate and address hate speech and hate crimes, including online, by, inter alia, facilitating the reporting of hate crimes by victims.

##### *Development, the environment, and business and human rights*

- Ensuring that women, children, persons with disabilities, minority groups and local communities are meaningfully engaged in the development and implementation of climate change and disaster risk reduction frameworks.

## **B. Civil and political rights**

### *Right to life, liberty and security of person*

- Revising its legislation to include a definition of torture that complies with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Seeking to analyse the reasons for the high rate of ethnic minorities among persons deprived of their liberty in detention units and taking appropriate measures accordingly.

### *Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law*

- Considering taking measures with a view to guaranteeing equal access to justice for persons belonging to ethnic minorities.
- Ensuring the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law throughout legal proceedings.

### *Fundamental freedoms*

- Considering bringing the access to information law into conformity with the obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other related international instruments.

### *Prohibition of all forms of slavery*

- Continuing efforts made to combat trafficking in persons and providing all assistance and support services to victims of trafficking.
- Adopting comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation and improving the procedure for early identification and referral of victims to appropriate services.

## **C. Economic, social and cultural rights**

### *Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work*

- Strengthening efforts to enforce equal pay for equal work.
- Redoubling efforts to integrate into the labour market Roma women, women from other ethnic minorities, migrants, women with disabilities and women from rural areas.

### *Right to social security*

- Strengthening measures to combat social exclusion of elderly persons, in particular in relation to the social assistance and pensions provided.

### *Right to health*

- Continuing taking steps to realize the right to health, among others, by ensuring access to healthcare services for all, including persons with disabilities.
- Further improving the access of women to sexual and reproductive health services.



### *Right to education*

- Continuing to step up efforts to provide equal opportunities in education, especially to ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups, including migrants, Roma and children with disabilities.

## **D. Rights of specific persons or groups**

### *Women*

- Adopting a comprehensive gender equality strategy that includes combating violence against women, combating gender stereotypes and increasing the representation of women in decision-making bodies in political life.
- Closing remaining gaps in the legal framework to prohibit all forms of gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence. This includes investigating all allegations, prosecuting perpetrators, ensuring victims have access to medical, legal and rehabilitation services, and implementing targeted awareness-raising campaigns.
- Strengthening efforts to ensure the protection of women against rape and sexual violence through possible legislative reform and establishing appropriate avenues for reporting abuse.
- Successfully realizing the first National Action Plan on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325.

### *Children*

- Developing a national plan on protecting children deprived of a family environment.
- Providing significant assistance to children exposed to domestic violence and addressing the psychosocial rehabilitation needs of each child.

### *Persons with disabilities*

- Continuing its efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Taking measures to ensure an adequate standard of living for persons with disabilities and for their full and effective participation in society, including access to inclusive education and labour opportunities.
- Adopting a new action plan on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### *Minorities*

- Ensuring that the application of the Law on the State Language does not discriminate in any way against members of ethnic minorities, especially in terms of employment in the public and private sectors.
- Continuing measures to promote the social integration and civil participation of persons belonging to ethnic minorities while preserving the uniqueness of their culture.
- Stepping up efforts to promote the integration of ethnic and language minorities in society.



*Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers*

- Developing and implementing programmes that facilitate better integration and access to labour markets for refugees and for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and which reconcile their respective social assistance benefits.
- Considering taking the necessary measures to ensure that any detention of asylum seekers is applied only as a measure of last resort, as well as to prohibit the detention of children for migration-related reasons.

*Stateless persons*

- Advancing legal, policy and/or practical steps to reduce statelessness, facilitating the acceleration of the naturalization of recognized stateless persons.
- Amending the Citizenship Law in order to provide for the automatic acquisition of citizenship by all children born on the territory of Latvia to “non-citizens” who would otherwise be stateless, including minors between 15 and 18 years of age.