



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

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Excellency,

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

As the final outcome report on the review of Singapore was recently adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 48th 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 Singapore – 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 140 delegations and the presentation made and responses provided by the delegation of Singapore. I have also considered the actions taken by the Government of Singapore to implement the 116 recommendations fully supported as well as the recommendation that was partially accepted 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 ratification by Singapore of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2017, and encourage Singapore to consider ratification of other international human rights treaties. I appreciate the efforts made by the Government to ensure that no child is left behind in terms of access to education and that in 2019 the Compulsory Education Act was extended to include children with moderate to severe special needs. I note, however, that children aged between 16 and 18 years are still treated as adults in the criminal justice system and may be sentenced to life imprisonment.

I also note the continued practice of corporal punishment as a judicially imposed punishment; that consensual same sex relations continue to be criminalized; and that legislation continues to unduly restrict the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. There also appear to be certain gaps in employment rights and protections for migrant workers, such as the exclusion of domestic workers under the Employment Act.

I welcome the regular five-year plans developed with persons with disabilities and stakeholders with measures to build a more inclusive society, and the increase in support for the employment of persons with disabilities. I welcome the amendments to the Penal Code to repeal marital immunity for rape and increase penalties for offences, and the establishment of an inter-agency task force on family violence to formulate recommendations on increasing awareness, protecting victims and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. I also take positive note that the Government will study the views raised during the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development, and that concrete proposals will be presented in a White Paper to Parliament in 2022.

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H.E. Dr. Vivian BALAKRISHNAN
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Singapore



I encourage Singapore 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 all civil society organizations and, where necessary, with the support of international organizations, including my Office and other United Nations entities, under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator.

I also encourage Singapore to make further efforts to strengthen the Inter-Ministry Committee on Human Rights 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.

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 Singapore 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 Singapore 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. Professor Heng Chee CHAN
Ambassador-at-Large
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Singapore

Ms. Karima EL KORRI
United Nations Resident Coordinator, Malaysia

Ms. Cynthia VELIKO
Regional Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, Thailand



Annex

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

- Ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 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.
- Ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolishing of the death penalty.
- Ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Ratifying the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on a communications procedure.
- Ratifying the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization.
- Acceding to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.
- Acceding to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

National human rights framework

- Establishing a national human rights institution in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

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

A. Cross-cutting issues

Equality and non-discrimination

- Incorporating the principle of non-discrimination into domestic legislation.
- Decriminalizing consensual same sex relations and increasing protection against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Incorporating provisions into the Constitution or other appropriate legislation with a definition of discrimination against women and provisions to prohibit all forms of discrimination against women, encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in the private and public spheres as well as intersecting forms of discrimination against women.
- Eliminating discrimination against children in marginalized or vulnerable situations, including children without Singaporean citizenship, girls, children with disabilities, children

of ethnic minorities, children of unmarried couples, children of same-sex couples and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children.

B. Civil and political rights

Right to life, liberty and security of person

- Establishing a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

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

- Abolishing the practice of corporal punishment as a judicially imposed punishment.
- Considering regularly reviewing the Penal Code with a view to raising the age of criminal responsibility to an internationally accepted standard.

Fundamental freedoms

- Ensuring that laws and policies on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association comply with the relevant international human rights standards.
- Ensuring that freedom of opinion and expression, as well as peaceful assembly, are protected.

Prohibition of all forms of slavery

- Continuing efforts to combat trafficking in women and girls for sexual and labour exploitation.
- Ensuring that all cases of sexual and labour exploitation and the sale, abduction and trafficking are investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.
- Ensuring the provision of adequate protection and support for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Right to family life

- Undertaking a comprehensive review of the Administration of Muslim Law Act to provide women with rights equal to those of men with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance.

C. Economic, social and cultural rights

Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

- Extending the applicability of the Employment Act to migrant domestic workers.

Right to social security

- Introducing a non-contributory old-age pension.

Right to an adequate standard of living

- Continuing to provide support to persons who have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those from low- or middle-income households.

Right to health

- Including age-appropriate education in sexual and reproductive health in the school curricula.

Right to education

- Improving access to quality education for vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities and children from low-income households.

D. Rights of specific persons or groups

Women

- Continuing efforts to address gender-based violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence.
- Continuing efforts to increase the participation of women in decision-making positions, including in political and public life.
- Addressing the gender pay gap.
- Ensuring that victims of sexual harassment in the workplace have access to effective complaint procedures and protection measures and recourse to remedies.

Children

- Adopting legislation explicitly and unconditionally prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children in all settings, namely in the home, at school, in alternative care settings and in the administration of justice.
- Investigating cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, prosecuting perpetrators and punishing those convicted with appropriate sanctions.
- Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to an internationally recognized standard.

Persons with disabilities

- Strengthening the implementation of the policy of inclusive education in schools.
- Strengthening awareness-raising campaigns targeting government officials, the public and families to combat stigma attached to and prejudice against children with disabilities.
- Ensuring the accessibility of health-care and support services to all persons with disabilities without discrimination.

Minorities

- Enhancing efforts to eradicate all forms of discrimination against minority groups.

Migrants

- Improving protections for migrant workers and foreign domestic workers, including by extending labour protections, addressing wage discrimination and increasing job mobility.

- Continuing efforts to uphold and protect the rights, safety, health and welfare of migrant workers, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stateless persons

- Ensuring that children born in Singapore who cannot acquire another nationality are able to automatically acquire Singaporean nationality.