

6th Francophone Seminar on the Universal Periodic Review
6 September 2022, Pre-Recorded Video Message
Opening Remarks - Asako Okai, ASG, Director, Crisis Bureau

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to join you for the fourth Francophone Seminar and this timely reflection of progress under the Universal Periodic Review.

At this moment of profound crisis, when threats to lives, dignity, and livelihoods are more widespread than any time in modern history – the value of the Universal Periodic Review process cannot be overstated. As a nationally owned and Member State driven process for upholding human rights, it reinforces our common values and those of the United Nations system.

The Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights also reminds us of the moral imperative and practical value of human rights work in all that we do. By urging us to accelerate progress towards the 2030 agenda with human rights as the foundation of our efforts, the Call to Action directs us to a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future for all.

Mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review process, special procedures, and treaty bodies are essential tools for answering this call.

And they are also invaluable instruments for advancing development.

These mechanisms contain a wealth of information and targeted recommendations that can be leveraged by you - the Member States - to deliver more timely and targeted development support.

For example, during this third cycle of the UPR alone – as climate related disasters spread worldwide - there have been over 250 recommendations related to the human rights implications of climate change.

These recommendations reflect timely insights, national and local ownership, ideas, and capacities that might otherwise be lost amid the cascade of crisis we now face.

Still, despite the potential of these mechanisms, we could see improvements to avoid a ‘technical cooperation gap’ between the work of the UPR and other human rights mechanisms and the reality of implementation.

Recognizing the extraordinary potential of human rights solutions for development progress UNDP is working with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Development Cooperation Office to fill this gap by “importing and exporting” good practices wherever they exist.

Through an extensive review of examples across the UN system we have identified a set of good practices, and earlier this year, published a repository of case studies highlighting the potential of UPR as a tool for sustainable development.

In our analysis, several key trends emerged.

First, our findings, highlight the growing practice of UN Country Teams and UN entities to broadly engage with the UPR process and utilize their recommendations in their work as a practical problem-solving tool for both human rights and development challenges.

UNDP is putting this approach into practice - from supporting non-discriminatory legal frameworks in Bangladesh; to strengthening civil society to advocate for change in Ukraine; or tackling violence against women and girls in Armenia.

Second, we have also seen that UPR recommendations are increasingly aligned with national plans to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Here, we found a clear need to support governments to integrate human rights targets into SDG tracking and reporting systems – indeed into entire SDG implementation systems.

This critical effort is already underway in Latin America where UNDP is supporting the analysis of nearly 1,500 human rights recommendations, aiming to speed up progress on a range of SDG targets.

Third, UN entities are adopting a whole-of-society approach for embedding the UPR process at country level - engaging with governments, national parliamentarians, civil society, and human rights organizations.

In Rwanda, this broad stakeholder approach has brought together, UNDP and OHCHR with the Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund and the Rwanda National Commission for Human Rights and other partners for a comprehensive review of the 2020 UPR recommendations alongside the 2019 Voluntary National Review findings, to inform the midterm assessment of Rwanda's national development plan and the next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,

As you can see, UNDP is committed to advancing human rights as a problem-solving tool.

All over the world, we are witnessing the power of this approach. Where nations make progress in human rights - progress in development quickly follows.

The Secretary General's Call to Action on Human Rights reminds us of our **shared responsibility** to uphold the rights and dignity of all people.

As you embark on this fourth Universal Periodic Review, I urge Member States to also be reminded of the **shared progress** that awaits us when we do.

Thank you.

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