



Board of Trustees

Terms of Reference

I. The Universal Rights Group

On 8th November 2012, the Universal Rights Group (URG) was established as a not-for-profit association under Swiss law¹.

The URG is a small, independent think tank dedicated to analysing and strengthening global human rights policy. It is the only such institution in Geneva and the only think tank in the world focusing exclusively on human rights.

The goal of the organization is to support and strengthen policy-making and policy-implementation in the international human rights system by providing rigorous yet accessible, timely and policy-relevant research, analysis and recommendation, a forum for discussion and debate on important human rights issues facing the international community, and a window onto the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms – a window designed to promote transparency, accountability, awareness and effectiveness.

A key aspect of this goal will be to make the international human rights system more accessible to and bring it into closer orbit with policy-makers and other stakeholders at regional, national and local levels.

Although the Group will focus on research and policy analysis over political lobbying and pressure tactics, it will nevertheless be a proactive agent of change. It will look to achieve change in three main ways:

1. Through the provision of independent, respected and policy-relevant research, analysis and recommendations.
2. Through providing a non-political and informal platform for dialogue, information-sharing and cooperation on pressing human rights concerns.

¹ Governed by the Statutes of the Universal Rights Group and Articles 60 et seq. of the Swiss Civil Code.



3. By promoting knowledge, understanding and awareness-raising at regional, national and grass-roots levels so as to empower individuals and groups to better engage with the international human rights system to drive change.

II. Mission

“To generate progress towards the full realization of the rights and freedoms contained in the universal human rights instruments through solutions-based policy research and forward-looking policy prescription, and through offering a respected platform for information-sharing and dialogue”.

III. Core Values

The Universal Rights Group will be guided by a series of core values:

Integrity, Independence and Impartiality – in order to have impact, the Group's work must be respected and credible.

Impact – everything the Group does will be premised on generating impact, on supporting and strengthening human rights policy-making.

Innovation - the Group will aim to be ‘ahead of the curve’ in responding strategically to important and emerging issues in order to provide policy-makers with timely guidance. It will also aim to be innovative in the way in which it delivers its outputs – with particular emphasis placed on leveraging information technology and social media.

Insight – the Group will also aim to help policy-makers understand and get to the heart of a particular issue, by offering new strategic thinking.

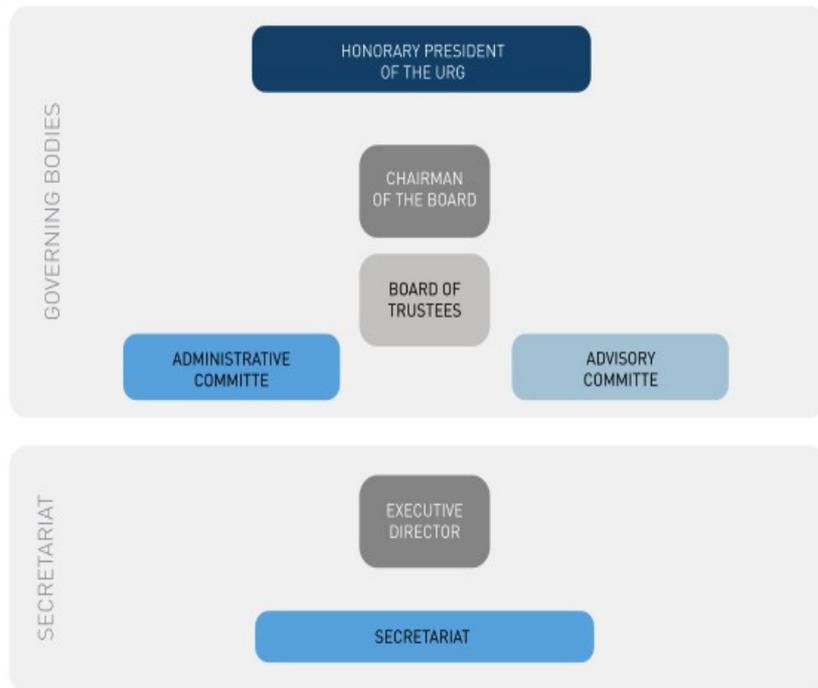
Inclusivity – the Group will aim to engage all stakeholders in its work. It will promote cross-regionalism and gender-balance in everything it does.

Integration – the URG's work will be premised on contributing to, supporting and improving the policy output of existing human rights structures and standards. The Group will also act as a 'bridge' or interface between renowned international experts and policy-makers in order to promote institutional linkages and knowledge-transfer.



IV. Organizational Structure

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE





The Universal Rights Group's work is developed in consultation with its Board of Trustees. The Board is composed of twelve eminent experts and thought-leaders from the field of human rights. The Board gives strategic guidance to the organisation and provides high-level input on potential areas of focus or key questions to be addressed. This includes consideration and adoption of the Group's programme of work.

An Advisory Committee has been established made up of respected human rights scholars and civil society leaders. The Advisory Committee advises the secretariat and Board of Trustees on substantive work (especially in the context of the programme of work); on potential new areas of focus; on suitable international experts to contribute to and review Policy Reports; and helps guarantee the quality of output.

An Administrative Committee is established to steer and coordinate administrative and financial matters, including audits. As per Swiss law, the Group's Administrative Committee includes Swiss nationals.

The Group's programme of work is implemented by a small secretariat based in Geneva. The Group will seek to provide secondment and internship opportunities.

All parts of the Group's organisational structure will strive for geographical and gender balance. The Board, the Advisory Committee and the secretariat all involve individuals (male and female) from North and South America, Africa, Europe and Asia.

V. Board of Trustees

1. Objectives of the Board of Trustees

Representing a broad-based and diverse group of eminent experts and thought-leaders in the field of human rights, the goal of the Board is to provide strategic guidance to the Universal Rights Group and ensure the implementation of its programmes in accordance with the Group's concept note and programme of work.

2. Activities

- Review and contribute to the Group's strategy (Concept and Strategy Paper), and approve the strategy.



- Review and contribute to the Group's Programme of Work, and approve the Programme.
- Provide guidance and advice to the secretariat of the Universal Rights Group on the implementation of the Group's strategy and Programme of Work.
- Assist with high-level validation of the Group's analysis, conclusions and policy recommendations.
- Support the Chair and secretariat in their networking and advocacy efforts by facilitating contacts and disseminating information about the Universal Rights Group;
- Monitor progress with regard to the implementation of the strategy and the Programme of Work and, if needed, ensure that adequate adjustments are made concerning planning and strategy.

In addition, members of the Board of Trustees may also be approached by the Chair and/or the secretariat to:

- Participate directly in Universal Rights Group projects of interest to them – including by co-authoring Group reports, by chairing Group events, by writing articles, or by providing commentary for press items. Members of the Board of Trustees will be remunerated where they co-author a Group report and travel costs incurred in the context of Group activities will be reimbursed.

3. Reporting

The Board of Trustees shall be regularly informed by the Chair or the secretariat about the development and activities of the Universal Rights Group.

The Board shall receive an annual activity report, prepared by the secretariat. After consideration by the Board, the annual activity report will be made publicly available.

The Board of Trustees shall also receive the secretariat's report with regard to the work of the Advisory Committee. This report shall be presented in time to inform the Board's consideration of the Group's strategy and Programme of Work.

4. Membership



The Board of Trustees is comprised of twelve members, participating in an individual capacity.

Efforts will be made to ensure balanced geographic and gender representation.

5. Meetings

The Board of Trustees will meet at least once a year via teleconference.

Meetings will be set by the Chair of the Universal Rights Group and organised by the secretariat.

6. The Bureau

The Board of Trustees will appoint one Chair and two Vice-Chairs who together will form the Bureau.

The Bureau will play an active role in the implementation of the Group's strategy and Programme of Work.

Members of the Bureau will travel for Geneva for meetings of the Board of Trustees (other members of the Board will join via teleconference) and travel and accommodation costs will be reimbursed.