



The Inside Track

**Concise information and political
insight on the upcoming session
of the Human Rights Council**

**HRC31: the 31st regular session of
the Human Rights Council**

Monday 29th February 2016 to Thursday 24th March
2016 (4 week session), Room XX, Palais des Nations

In brief

- At the opening of the 31st Session of the Human Rights Council (29th February-2nd March) there will be a High-Level Segment (HLS) featuring statements by dignitaries including H.E. Mr Choi Kyong-lim, President of the Human Rights Council, H.E. Mr Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly, Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and H.E. Mr Didier Burkhalter, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. In total, 97 officials will speak during the HLS, including 2 Heads of State, 2 Vice Presidents, 7 Deputy Prime Ministers, 59 Ministers, and 17 Vice Ministers.

- The HLS will also see two high-level panels: one mainstreaming panel on 'the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and human rights, with an emphasis on the right to development' and one on the 50th anniversary of the international human rights Covenants. The former will include interventions by H.E. Mr Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, Ms Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Chair of the United Nations Development Group, and Dr Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

- HRC31 will see a total of 10 panel discussions, including on climate change and the right to health, the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, and on HIV/AIDS.

- On 10th March, the High Commissioner will present his annual human rights report.

- During the session, the Council will consider reports by the High Commissioner or the Secretary-General on country-specific human rights issues in Afghanistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Libya, the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Guinea, South Sudan and Iran. The Council will also consider the report of the COI on Syria. On 15th March, the High Commissioner will deliver an oral update on the situation in Eritrea.

- The Council will also consider thematic reports on, inter alia: the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities; the impact of the arbitrary deprivation of nationality on the rights of children; information technology and child sexual exploitation; and the situation of migrants in transit.

- Members of the Council will consider regular reports (including, in some cases, country mission reports) from, and/or hold interactive dialogues with 25 Special Procedures mandate-holders (9 country-specific and 16 thematic), including the Special Rapporteur on Iran, the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, the Independent Expert on Côte D'Ivoire, the Independent Expert on Mali, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Special Rapporteur on food.

- HRC31 is expected to see the adoption of 14 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) outcome reports.

- At the end of the session, Council members will move to take action on around 40 draft resolutions and other texts, and to appoint 2 new Special Procedures mandate holders.

One year ago...

HRC28:
2.03-27.03 2015

The 28th session of the Council (2nd March to 27th March 2015) saw difficult discussions around a report by the UN's Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and a subsequent resolution, tabled by Cuba, on the composition of OHCHR. HRC28 also saw the creation of a new Special Procedures mandate on the right to privacy; the consensual adoption of 2 important and potentially divisive resolutions on religion – one following up on resolution 16/18 on religious intolerance (OIC), and one on freedom of religion or belief (EU); and the adoption of resolutions on DPRK, Iran, Myanmar and Syria.

As noted by the then President of the Council, in his closing remarks at the end of HRC28, one negative development during the session was an apparent increase in acts of intimidation against civil society and human rights defenders.

[A detailed report of the outcome of the 28th session can be read here.](#)

29.02

Opening of the HLD, panel on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

01.03

High level panel on 50th anniversary of human rights Covenants

10.03

Presentation of annual report of the High Commissioner

14.03

Interactive dialogues with Special Rapporteurs on DPRK, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar

15.03

Interactive dialogue with COI on Syria, presentation of OHCHR report on DPRK, and oral update on Eritrea

16.03

Adoption of the UPR reports of Micronesia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Nauru, Rwanda, Nepal and Austria

17.03

Adoption of the UPR reports of Australia, Georgia, Saint Lucia, Oman, Myanmar, and Saint Kitts and Nevis

17.03

Panel discussion on the human rights dimensions of preventing and countering violent extremism

21.03

Enhanced interactive dialogue on Burundi; interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the Central African Republic

22.03

High Commissioner's report on South Sudan, and oral update on Ukraine

23.03

High Commissioner oral updates and/or reports on: Afghanistan, DPRK, Libya, OPT, Guinea, South Sudan and Iran

23-24.03

Action on draft resolutions and decisions, and appointment of mandate-holders.

For your diary¹

For the full draft programme of work for the 31st session, [please click here](#)

Global human rights situation

On 10th March⁽²⁾, the High Commissioner will present his regular update on the human rights situation around the world. His statement, which is usually circulated to delegations shortly before the start of the session, provides the basis for a general debate under item 2.

Panel debates

HRC31 is scheduled to hold 10 panel debates/thematic discussions on:

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and human rights, with an emphasis on the right to development.
- 50th anniversary of the International Covenants on Human Rights.
- Climate change and the right to health.
- Article 11 of the CRPD on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies.
- Information technology and child sexual exploitation.
- Human rights in the context of efforts to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030.
- Human rights dimensions of preventing and countering violent extremism.
- Incompatibility between democracy and racism.
- Commemoration of the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination.
- Technical cooperation to promote and protect the rights of all migrants.

[Concept notes and background information on these panel discussions, when published, will be available here](#)

1. Dates liable to change

'L number' ⁽²⁾ – draft resolutions and other texts at HRC31

Based on announcements made during the HRC31 organisational meeting, on the voluntary calendar of regular initiatives, and on recurring initiatives from one year previously (HRC28), a number of important draft resolutions and other texts can be expected to be tabled during the HRC31. Before the adoption, these texts would be subject to at least one round of open informal consultations with interested delegations.

Country-specific resolutions



Initiative formally announced during the HRC31 organisational meeting

Focus of resolution	Lead sponsor(s)	Expected agenda item	Vote history
Technical cooperation in Guinea	African Group	10	Consensus
Technical assistance in Mali	African Group	10	Consensus
Situation in Iran	Sweden, US and core group	4	Adopted by vote (20-11-16)
Human rights in Iraq in the light of the abuses by terrorist groups	Arab Group	10	Consensus
Technical assistance in Libya	African Group	10	Consensus
Situation in DPRK	Japan, EU	4	Adopted by vote (27-6-14)
Situation in Myanmar	EU	4	Consensus
Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan	OIC	7	Adopted by vote (29-1-17)
Situation in Syria	UK and core group	4	Adopted by vote (29-6-12)
Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination	OIC	7	Adopted by vote (45-1-1)
Israeli settlements	OIC	7	Adopted by vote (45-1-1)
Situation in OPT	OIC	7	Adopted by vote (43-1-3)
Situation in South Sudan	US and core group	2	Consensus

2. When tabled before the Council, draft resolutions (and other texts) are given an 'L number.'

Thematic resolutions

Focus of resolutions	Lead sponsor(s)	Expected agenda item	Periodicity	Vote history	
Combating religious intolerance (res. 16/18)	OIC	9	Annual	Consensus	
Effects of terrorism on human rights	Egypt and core group	3	Annual	Adopted by vote (25-16-6)	
Effective implementation of international human rights instruments	Canada	3	Annual	Consensus	
Elaboration of complementary standards to ICERD	African Group	3	Annual	Consensus	
Enhancement of international cooperation	NAM	3	Annual	Consensus	
Freedom of religion or belief	EU	3	Annual	Consensus	
Human rights and the environment	Slovenia and core group	3	Annual	Consensus	
Human rights while countering terrorism	Mexico	3	Biennial	Consensus	
Human rights defenders	Norway	3	Biennial	Consensus	
HIV/AIDS	Brazil and core group	3	Annual	Consensus	
Integrity of the judicial system	Russia	3	Biennial	Adopted by vote (27-1-19)	
Mainstreaming	Portugal	3	Annual	Consensus	
Minorities	Austria, Senegal, Slovenia	3	Biennial	Consensus	
Platform for education and training in human rights	Morocco	3	Annual	Consensus	
Human rights, sports and the Olympic ideal	Greece and core group	3	Biennial	Consensus	
Cultural rights and respect for cultural diversity	Cuba	3	Annual	Consensus	
Realization of ESCRs	Portugal	3	Annual	Consensus	
Right to adequate housing	Finland, Brazil, Germany	3	Biennial	Consensus	
Rights of the child	EU, GRULAC	3	Annual	Consensus	
Non-repatriation of funds of illicit origin	African Group	3	Annual	Adopted by vote (33-2-12)	

Thematic resolutions

Focus of resolutions	Lead sponsor(s)	Expected agenda item	Periodicity	Vote history
The effects of foreign debt	Cuba	3	Annual	Adopted by vote (31- 14-1)
The right to food	Cuba	3	Annual	Consensus
The right to work	Egypt and core group	3	Annual	Consensus
The right to privacy	Brazil, Germany and core group	3	Annual	Consensus
Good governance	Australia and core group	3	Biennial	Consensus
Peaceful protests	Switzerland, Costa Rica, Turkey	3	Biennial	Consensus
Torture	Denmark	3	Biennial	Consensus

Resolution in focus

First, as during each March session, eyes will be turned towards two draft resolutions dealing with religion and human rights: one by the EU on freedom of religion or belief (which will include a call for the renewal of the Special Procedures mandate), and one by OIC on combatting religious intolerance. Despite repeated calls for these two interrelated texts to be 'decoupled' (e.g. biennialised and staggered between the Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly), at HRC31 the two lead sponsors will continue to barter small amendments in one text against small edits in the other. Second, resolutions dealing with freedom of association and civil society space have, unfortunately, become a 'lightning rod' for difficult negotiations and votes over recent years – both in Geneva and New York. At HRC31, States will consider a new text from Norway on human rights defenders. Historically these resolutions have been adopted by consensus, and it would send a positive political signal about the importance of civil society space for that to continue in 2016.

The Trust Fund for the participation of LDCs and SIDS in the work of the Council, which was set up in 2012, will help fund the participation of Government officials from Samoa, Malawi, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Saint Kitts and Nevis at HRC31.

Trust fund to support the participation of LDCs and SIDS

During HRC31, States will consider around 80 reports from the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary-General or Special Procedures mandate-holders. These UN reports, which were commissioned by the Council through earlier resolutions, cover, inter alia, the following subjects:

Thematic reports: **freedom of religion and belief**; **ethnic minorities**; **children and armed conflict**; **violence against children**; rights of persons with **disabilities**; the question of the realization of **economic, social and cultural rights**; the right to **work**; information technology and **child sexual exploitation**; the situation of **migrants in transit**; protection of the **family**; and international **cooperation**.

Country specific reports: question of human rights in **Cyprus**; situation in **DPRK**; implementation of resolutions on the **Gaza** conflict; situation in the **OPT**; **Côte D'Ivoire**; **Haiti**; OHCHR investigation on **Libya**; OHCHR mission to improve accountability, reconciliation and capacity in **South Sudan**; the situation in **Mali**; and the situation in **Guinea**.

Summary reports of previous panel debates/working groups: **good governance** in the public service; **unilateral coercive measures**; impact of **world drug problem**; and **transnational corporations** and other business enterprises.

[These and other reports, when published, will be made available here.](#)

What's in print?

Special Procedures

Over the course of the 31st session, **16 thematic Special Procedures** (e.g. Special Rapporteurs) will present reports exploring issues and questions related to their mandate. Many of these thematic Special Rapporteurs will also present country mission reports (in addendum to their main reports). In addition, 8 country-specific Special Procedures will present reports on the human rights situation in the countries covered by their mandates and on their engagement with the concerned State(s). The Special Rapporteur on Eritrea will also provide an oral update.

The Council's mechanisms

Country-specific mandates

Mandate	Presentation of report and interactive dialogue ³
Special Rapporteur on DPRK	14 th March 2016
Special Rapporteur on Eritrea (oral update)	14 th March 2016
Special Rapporteur on Iran	14 th March 2016
Special Rapporteur on Myanmar	14 th March 2016
Special Rapporteur on the OPT	21 st March 2016
Independent Expert on Central African Republic	21 st March 2016
Independent Experts on Mali, Haiti, Côte D'Ivoire	22 nd March 2016

3. Dates liable to change

Thematic mandates

Mandate	Date of presentation reports and clustered interactive dialogue ⁴	Country mission reports (in addendum)
Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment	3 rd March 2016	
Special Rapporteur on adequate housing	3 rd March 2016	Cape Verde, Serbia and Kosovo
Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders	3 rd March 2016	Burundi
Independent Expert on albinism	4 th March 2016	
Special Rapporteur on persons with disabilities	4 th March 2016	Moldova
Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt	7 th March 2016	Greece, China
Special Rapporteur on the right to food	7 th March 2016	Philippines, Morocco
Special Rapporteur on torture	8 th March 2016	Brazil
Special Rapporteur on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	8 th March 2016	Japan, Armenia
Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy	9 th March 2016	
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief	9 th March 2016	Bangladesh, Lebanon
Special Rapporteur on freedom of assembly and association , and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions (joint compilation report)	9 th March 2016	
Special Rapporteur on human rights while countering terrorism	10 th March 2016	
Special Rapporteur on cultural rights	10 th March 2016	Botswana
Independent Expert on minorities issues	15 th March 2016	Brazil

Reports presented to the Council by the Special Procedures will be available [here](#).

Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The UPR outcome reports of 14 countries will be considered for adoption during HRC31. On 16th March, the Council will consider and move to adopt the reports of Micronesia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Nauru, Rwanda, Nepal and Austria. On 17th March 2016, it will consider and take action on the outcome reports of Australia, Georgia, Saint Lucia, Oman, Myanmar and Saint Kitts and Nevis. On 18th March, the outcome report of Sao Tomé and Príncipe will be considered and adopted.

4. Dates liable to change



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