



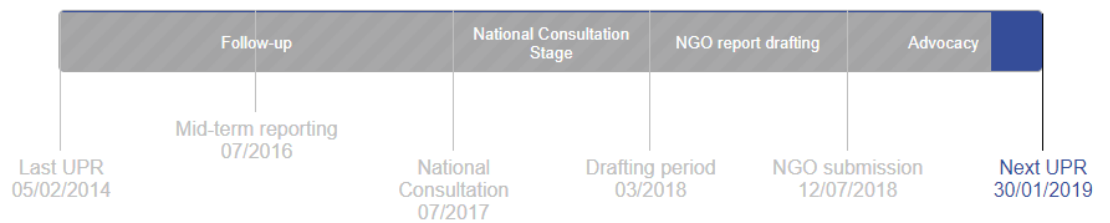
ACTIVITY REPORT

Cambodia

In-country Pre-session

14-16 November 2018

Timeline for UPR engagement in the current cycle



1. Introduction

On 14-16 November 2018, the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), OHCHR in Cambodia and UPR Info organised an in-country Pre-session in Phnom Penh. On the first day, some 60 CSO representatives gathered for a preparatory day at which UPR Info oriented participants on the upcoming dialogues with Recommending states in Phnom Penh (November) and Geneva (December). Mr. Benjamin Knödler, Deputy Head of Mission of German Embassy in Phnom Penh, held a session in which he shared how the embassy engages with the UPR in terms of collecting information; phrasing recommendations; following up on implementation; and working with national UPR stakeholders. In the afternoon, the speakers selected for the Pre-session the following day fine-tuned their interventions and presented them to participants in a mock-session for feedback. In the final segment of the day, Mr. Wilson de los Reyes from The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education [RFSU] shared insights into the diplomatic landscape in Geneva and practical suggestions on how to advocate for civil society-suggested recommendations with diplomats. On the second day, the Delegation of the European Union to Cambodia generously hosted the Pre-session in Phnom Penh which brought together national CSOs with Recommending states from 12 embassies. Two panel sessions were moderated by UPR Info before the dialogue between diplomats and civil society continued in an informal fashion in thematic break-out groups. The focus of the third day was on the UPR engagement of youth groups. UPR Info introduced the peer-review mechanism followed by an energetic Q&A session on how youth can begin to interact with the UPR. This was followed by national CSOs sharing their human rights concerns and suggested UPR recommendations, before delegates from youth groups presented their human rights work and ideas on how to contribute in the UPR implementation phase.

The event was co-organised by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, OHCHR in Cambodia and *UPR Info*. It built on [previous activities](#) undertaken by these actors in Cambodia.

2. Activity

2.1. Overview

On 14 November, some 60 representatives from national civil society organisations participated in a preparatory day ahead of the in-country Pre-session. *UPR Info* provided guidance for the speakers and stressed the need to keep interventions brief, concise, solution-oriented and impartial to maximise impact. The wider advocacy opportunities presented by Pre-sessions in Phnom Penh and Geneva were also addressed, with a particular focus on how to encourage Recommending states to utilise civil society-suggested UPR recommendations at Cambodia's 3rd review on 30th of January. To this end, the working groups which contributed to the [joint CSO submission](#) earlier in 2018 had developed thematic [UPR Advocacy Factsheets](#) to further strengthen their advocacy. Before lunch Mr. Benjamin Knödler, Deputy Head of

Mission at the German Embassy in Phnom Penh share the role of the embassy in phrasing Germany's UPR recommendations to Cambodia; an exercise that is jointly conducted by German diplomats in Berlin, Phnom Penh, and at the German mission in Geneva. He also made the link between Germany's foreign policy objectives and how they influence which topics they address in recommendations. Mr Knödler commended the Pre-sessions as a platform to gather first-hand information on a broad range of human rights topics ahead of the review. In the Q&A session, civil society noted the need for coordinated engagement by Recommending states in the follow-up phase and to closely work with CSOs in the implementation process. In the afternoon, time was allotted to fine-tune statements and presentations ahead of the Pre-session the following day. Speakers worked with their colleagues from their respective thematic group to finalise interventions, after which each of the speakers presented to the plenary in the form of a simulation exercise. UPR Info moderated and provided detailed feedback to each speaker. Bearing in mind that Cambodian CSOs are scheduled to participate in a Pre-session in Geneva in December, the session lead by Mr. Wilson de los Reyes from The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education [RFSU] on international advocacy proved most useful. He offered practical advice on how to map and approach states and other UPR stakeholders in Geneva, and underscored that in order to influence recommendations it is pivotal to deliver a clear message to diplomats underpinned by credible evidence.

The second day was the highlighted of the week as the Delegation of the European Union to Cambodia graciously hosted the Pre-session which brought together some 70 representatives from national CSOs, UN agencies, EU, and Recommending states from the embassies of Belgium, USA, Switzerland, Austria, Australia, Sweden, France, Republic of Korea, Japan, Germany and the Czech Republic. Opening remarks were given by Mr Simone Pieri, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Cambodia; Mr Simon Walker, Representative a.i., United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia (OHCHR); Ms. Chor Chanthyda, Program Director, Cambodian Center for Human Rights; and Mr. Hans Fridlund, Programme Manager, UPR Info. In the next segment, UPR Info moderated two interactive dialogues between civil society representatives and diplomats in which civil society representatives presented their human rights concerns and suggested UPR recommendations related to 13 themes:

- ❖ Gender/Women's Rights
- ❖ Rights of the child
- ❖ Sexual and reproductive health and rights & sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) rights.
- ❖ Public health
- ❖ Persons living with disabilities
- ❖ Land and Natural resources
- ❖ Anti-Drug campaign and rights of people who use drugs
- ❖ Elections
- ❖ Khmer Krom rights
- ❖ Labour Rights
- ❖ Access to Justice
- ❖ Fundamental Freedoms and Civic Space
- ❖ Rule of law

Questions from the diplomatic and development community addressed CSOs expectations on the government in the implementation of 3rd cycle UPR recommendations; developments in the implementation of 2nd cycle recommendations on land grabbing, freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of the press, child labour and trafficking; and what space there is for national human rights defenders to operate Cambodia. In the afternoon the discussion continued in a more informal setting based on thematic break-out groups. During the conversations, civil society presented their UPR Advocacy Factsheets and diplomats asked for further clarifications on their focus areas. As a result, several ideas on how to enhance cooperation between UPR actors in Cambodia in the implementation process emerged from the dialogue. For some of the CSO representatives it was the first time that they engaged with the international community in the capital which prompted an exchange of contact details which will be useful in the next steps of the process. In closing, Mr. Simon Walker highlighted the value of the Pre-session in terms of displaying the interconnectedness amongst a broad spectrum of rights and applauded the coordination of the Pre-session and civil society for providing a balanced update on the human rights situation in Cambodia. He moreover said that the information shared during the event is useful beyond the UPR to inform national processes and upcoming reviews in treaty bodies. H.E. Mr. George Edgar, Ambassador of the European Union to Cambodia, noted that UPR recommendations form part of the delegation's bilateral dialogue with Cambodia, that EU in Geneva participate in UPR Info's Pre-sessions to collect information from civil society, and makes statements under Human Rights Council Agenda Item 6 General Debate which is devoted to the UPR. In elaborating on the cooperation between national CSOs and the Delegation, he spotlighted that their insights on the realities of Cambodia is central for the work of the EU and shared that the delegation's funding for civil society will increase in 2019.

On the third day, attention was turned towards the engagement of youth in the UPR. In total, 45 persons from youth groups and civil society participated in the programme. In the opening session, UPR Info presented on the origins and functioning of the mechanism with a particular emphasis on how youth groups can invoke the UPR as a vehicle to achieve their advocacy goals. It was followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Mr Yuthyia Soun, Advocacy Director at CCHR, in which Ms. Ramana Sorn, Protecting Fundamental Freedoms Project Coordinator, CCHR; Ms. Cybèle Hauptert, Head of Civil Society and Fundamental Freedoms Unit, OHCHR; and Mr. Hans Fridlund, Programme Manager, UPR Info shared information on the roles of different actors and how they have contributed to Cambodia's UPR process. The mutually reinforcing link between the SDGs and UPR recommendations was stressed in relation to the implementation phase which will commence in early 2019 following the country's 3rd review. In the ensuing discussion, youth groups discussed how civil society can work with the UPR in restrictive environments and examined the flow of recommendations from neighboring countries to Cambodia in the first and second cycle. Questions of a more practical nature included how youth groups can add to the UPR reporting. In the afternoon, speakers from the Pre-session shared their testimonies with the plenary which triggered a vibrant discussion on the state of human rights in the country and the role of youth in fostering participatory democracy. The final session proved to be another highlight as youth leaders presented on their engagement in social work, development and human rights. The day succeeded in bringing youth groups closer to established CSOs which will add much value in the process supporting implementation of UPR recommendations.

2.2. Achievements

The In-country Pre-session succeeded in bringing together Recommending states with a cross-section of national civil society group for an exchange on the human rights situation in Cambodia and a deliberation on what recommendations should be made at its third UPR. The Pre-session was well attended, with some diplomats flying in from postings in Bangkok to participate in the event. The Pre-session further benefitted from the presence of delegates from UNICEF, UNDP, UN Women, OHCHR and the Resident Coordinator's Office. Civil society received much praise for their factsheets which diplomats found useful in providing an at-a-glance overview of a specific human rights topic and corresponding recommendations on how to advance the situation. Considering that youth in Cambodia make up around 65% of the population, the involvement of youth groups addressed the need to involve this segment of society in the UPR process and to inform on how they can contribute to implementation of recommendations.

The workshop succeeded in;

- ✓ Strengthening collaboration between national CSOs, Recommending states and international organisations in Cambodia ahead of monitoring and implementing Cambodia's 3rd UPR cycle;
- ✓ Providing the diplomatic and development community with an update on the human rights situation in Cambodia and implementation levels of 2nd cycle UPR recommendations based on first-hand credible evidence from the ground;
- ✓ Disseminating 11 thematic UPR Advocacy Factsheets to representatives from 12 diplomatic missions;
- ✓ Updating UN agencies on national UPR activities;
- ✓ Establishing a civil society roadmap for engagement in the implementation process;
- ✓ Exploring ways for youth groups to engage with the UPR at the national level; and
- ✓ Ensuring gender balance amongst Pre-session speakers (54% women, 46% men), and Pre-sessions participants (51% women, 49% men).

2.3. Lessons learnt

The cooperation between CCHR, OHCHR in Cambodia, and UPR Info continues to be a true success story in ensuring an inclusive UPR process at the domestic level. It will be key to harness and build on this unique partnership in the follow-up phase. A lot of efforts went into producing the UPR Advocacy Factsheets, and it was thus rewarding to witness how well received they were by the diplomatic community. Resident diplomats in Phnom Penh will share them with colleagues in their capitals and Geneva and it is hoped that they will be used to develop action-oriented and relevant recommendations in the upcoming review. The EU Delegation was a tremendous host and contributed to raising the profile of the event as well as ensuring good participation from the diplomatic and development community.



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3. Way forward

In December, UPR Info hosts a Pre-session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It presents another opportunity for national human rights defenders to share their insights on the human rights performance of the Government, the implementation levels of previous UPR recommendations and suggest recommendations ahead of Cambodia's 3rd UPR on the 30th of January 2019. Besides participating in the actual Pre-session, Cambodian CSOs will enjoy the possibility of bilateral meetings to further strengthen their relations with Recommending states. A civil society strategy workshop is foreseen to take place in the timeframe between the review and the adoption of Cambodia's 3rd UPR Working Group Report to outline how CSOs can optimise their contributions to the implementation of recommendations.

4. Testimonies

Contributors have been guaranteed anonymity.

The organisers have done an amazing job! They provided us with a great opportunity to deliver our statement to the diplomats and representatives from international organisations at the EU Delegation. It was a great pleasure for our organisation to participate and to make our voice heard. **We hope we will contribute to UPR recommendations which reflect the concerns of civil society.**

As the leading organisation in the coalition on child rights, we will share this experience with our members at our next meeting. We will also participate in the upcoming UPR Info Pre-session in Geneva in December 2018. **After the review, we will work closely with our members to analyse the child rights recommendations which were made and disseminate the results to members and other key stakeholders.**

I was delighted to participate in this important event which allowed us to lobby state parties and present recommendations ahead of the review in Geneva. Even though it is my first time participating in the UPR process, **I feel positive that this mechanism will help to improve the human rights situation in Cambodia across all themes. I look forward to participate in upcoming UPR activities.**



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