

The Role of Journalism in the Universal Periodic Review Process

Side event at the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council

10th October 2023,
15h00 – 16h00 (CET)
Room XXIV, Palais
des Nations

Panelists

- Ms. Gabriela Sotomayor, author of the UPR guidelines for Journalists and journalist accredited to the United Nations in Geneva.
- Mr. Tamer Aboalenin, President of Association of Accredited Correspondents at the United Nations
- Ms. Nicoletta Zappile, Programme Manager, UPRInfo
- Mr. Albert E. Sharra, PhD, Multi-award winning Journalist, Malawi

Moderated by: Mr. Kristjan Burgess, Senior Programme Specialist, Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section, UNESCO



Launch of *The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and its potential to foster freedom of expression, access to information and safety of journalists: a guide for journalists*



Freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Freedom of expression is a necessary condition for achieving the principles of transparency and accountability which, in turn, are essential for the promotion and protection of other human rights.

Media coverage of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in both national and international press offers an unparalleled opportunity to advance human rights. It illuminates human rights situations while exerting pressure on the states under review to improve protection of human rights. Media coverage is a crucial piece of UPR puzzle, catalyzing the advancement of respect, protection, and the fulfillment of human rights. Independent and diverse press within the UPR process equips the public with comprehensive insights into national human rights landscapes.

By shedding light on the UPR proceedings, the journalistic community has the power to propel pertinent issues onto the national forefront, amplifying the importance of human rights for everyone. Through this process, the media acts as a conduit, channeling essential topics onto the national agenda, instigating conversations that resonate across society.

Furthermore, journalists and other media workers play a crucial role in holding relevant stakeholders accountable for the execution of public human rights policies. Investigative journalists, in particular, assume the role of vigilant watchdogs, closely monitoring the human rights agenda and leveraging the wealth of information emerging from the UPR process. Their work serves as a formidable force in ensuring that commitments made during the UPR are translated into tangible actions on the ground.

In essence, media coverage is not merely an observer but an active participant in the UPR journey. Its unwavering commitment to transparency, scrutiny, and dissemination of information is pivotal in driving positive change, fostering a society that values and champions human rights at its core. Journalistic work on the UPR can be essential to each country improving the implementation of its public policies.

The side event co-organized by UNESCO, UPRInfo and the Association of Accredited Correspondents at the United Nations (ACANU) will discuss the best practices that journalists can adopt to effectively participate in the UPR process, harnessing its complete potential to advance and uphold freedom of expression. The event is supported by the Permanent Missions of Chile and Sweden in Geneva.

As part of its work to produce resources on how different actors can use the UPR to contribute to issues related to freedom of expression, UNESCO has published new [Guidelines for Journalists](#) to engage with the UPR process to protect freedom of expression. The guidelines are part of a [series](#), produced by UNESCO and partners, to use the UPR's potential in improving freedom of expression, access to information and safety of journalists.



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