



What is the UN Human Rights Council (HRC)?

The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the UN system. It is composed of 47 member States but all UN member States can participate to the Council's discussions and to the negotiation of new resolutions. It is the main international forum on human rights and, as such, it offers a wide range of opportunities for NGOs to raise awareness about and promote human rights, including child rights, issues. The lobbying practice at the Council is very informal and it is very easy to approach state delegates and organise bilateral meetings with them.

1. HRC sessions

The Human Rights Council (HRC) has three sessions per year: in September, March and June.

During each session:

- Thematic reports are presented by the Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and the High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- There are panel discussions and special events on specific issues (these include, for instance, the Annual day on the Rights of the Child);
- Universal Periodic Review (UPR) outcome reports are adopted;
- Thematic and country specific resolutions are negotiated and presented for adoption before the Council at the end of the session.

The HRC may also hold special sessions at the request of a member State, if it is supported by at least one third of its member States (16 member States).

TIP:

ECOSOC NGOs can participate to all the sessions of the Human Rights Council (except for the closed session on the Complaints procedure), including all the informal open-ended negotiations meetings where new resolutions are discussed.

If your NGO does not have ECOSOC status, you can always contact a partner organisation and ask if they would consider to accredit you for an HRC session.¹ Similarly, if you don't have ECOSOC status and want to submit a written statement or deliver an oral statement, you can ask partner organisations with ECOSOC status to join your statement and then officially register your statement under the name of those organisation.²

¹ The database of NGOs with ECOSOC status can be found at: <http://csonet.org/>

² Contact Child Rights Connect's Secretariat for more information about this possibility at emaleh@childrightsconnect.org

2. Monitoring

All resolutions may contain references to children issues, humanitarian law, conflict situations and calls to all States or to particular States. Resolutions can also ask the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) or independent experts to conduct consultations on such specific themes with civil society.

At the end of each session, a report of the HRC, which includes summaries of the proceedings and all the resolutions adopted, is prepared and transmitted to the UN General Assembly.

The entire sessions of the HRC are also webcasted and can be watched live or afterwards by checking the archives, here: <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/c/un-human-rights-council.html>

3. Reporting

While NGOs cannot “report” as such to the HRC, it is possible for ECOSOC status NGOs to submit “written statements” in advance of the session that will become an official UN document and will be available on the “Documentation” page of the relevant session (e.g., for the 27th session, here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session27/Pages/Documentation.aspx>)

All NGOs can also send communications/complaints alleging “a consistent pattern of gross and reliably attested violations of human rights” under the HRC’s “Complaints Procedure”. Complaints are first examined by independent experts, forming the “[Working Group on Communications](#)” (WGC). Once they are decided to be admissible, they are transmitted to the “[Working Group on Situations](#)” (WGS), which comprises five States members of the Council, appointed by the regional groups.

4. Lobbying

NGOs can lobby States:

- To initiate a new resolution on a particular theme / establishing a new mandate (Special Procedure, Independent Expert, Intergovernmental Working Group, ...) before the session;
- To include a specific theme/issue in their traditional resolutions³ before the session;
- To ensure that the language used in the resolution is the appropriate one or to insert new language during the negotiation of resolutions.

5. Public campaigning and media

ECOSOC accredited NGOs can participate to the debates of the HRC by delivering oral statements under each item of the HRC’s agenda. In some cases, oral statements can be

³ Resolutions are led by a State called « main sponsor ». That State is in charge of preparing the first draft resolution that forms the basis of the negotiations during the session.

delivered via video.⁴ Oral statements can contain questions, e.g. when they are delivered during “Interactive Dialogues”, or just highlight particular issues and situations.

ECOSOC accredited NGOs can also organise side events (co-sponsored by a Permanent Mission, UN agency, a UN mission, or not) during the HRC session (side events used to take place during the lunch break, between 1pm and 3pm, but given the high number of side events and the continuity of plenary sessions without a break, they can now take place at any time) to launch publications, present a specific situation/issue, etc. Rooms can be booked for free through the [Civil Society Section](#), or as specified on the NGO Participation webpage of the [HRC session](#). If you wish to provide sandwiches and refreshments outside the room for participants, they are to be ordered to the cafeteria service of the UN exclusively.

News agencies are present during the entire session and have desks in the UN. NGOs can set up press conferences, organise interviews with selected media, etc.

6. Capacity building

Side events can be a good forum to discuss certain issues more substantively and raise awareness amongst State delegates and other stakeholders (UN agencies like UNHCR, UNICEF, NGOs working in a different field). But there is no space to really “train” people and those present in Geneva may not be the best placed to follow up on these issues at the national level.

7. Coalitions and networking

Engaging with the HRC is a good opportunity to build or strengthen relationships with other NGOs, including international human rights NGOs, work with other child rights NGOs under the coordination of Child Rights Connect’s Secretariat, for instance, and with UN missions in Geneva.

It also gives a “face” to your NGO at the international level.

8. Child participation

Children have participated in past sessions of the HRC:

- As panellists during thematic discussions of the Council
- As speakers delivering oral statements to the Council
- As speakers during side events
- Through videos or presentations gathering children’s views broadcasted during side-events or thematic discussions of the Council

⁴ The HRC has recently been reviewing its working methods and has agreed to allow ECOSOC status NGOs, which are not based in Geneva, to deliver oral statements via videos shown during the HRC session. The modalities and technicalities are still being finalised. For more information, please contact the [Civil Society Section](#) and see <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GuidelinesNGOVideoStatements.pdf> .

How does Child Rights Connect engage with the Human Rights Council?

What we can provide to members: Child Rights Connect provides a coordination platform for members to collaborate, maximise opportunities and engage more effectively with the HRC.

Contact Laure Elmaleh, who is the focal point of Child Rights Connect Secretariat for coordination on the HRC, for any question at elmaleh@childrightsconnect.org.

What we have done: Child Rights Connect Secretariat recently coordinated with members for the submission and delivery of joint written and oral statements within discussions of the HRC on the protection of the family.

Background information:

- Official website of the HRC:
- <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>
- HRC extranet (with the most updated information, including oral statements delivered during each session, draft resolutions, etc.):
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCRegistration.aspx>
To access the extranet:
User Name: HRC[space]extranet
Password: 1session
- NGO Participation information (including forms for oral statements and deadlines): accessible from each session page, see, for example, for session 28th:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NgoParticipation.aspx>
- Guidelines for the online submission of written statements before the HRC session can be found here:
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/PracticalGuideSubmissionNGO_ws.pdf
- Presentation of the HRC's Complaints Procedure:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/ComplaintProcedure/Pages/HRCComplaintProcedureIndex.aspx>

Key contacts:

At OHCHR

[OHCHR Civil Society Section](#)

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