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Implementing the General Assembly resolution 68/268

Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system - NHRI input 2026 - Finland

This document contains observations by the Finnish Human Rights Centre (HRC¹, NHRI) to OHCHR for the SG report on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, with reference to implementing the General Assembly resolution 68/268.

Should you have any further questions or need for additional information, do not hesitate to contact us at leena.leikas@humanrightscentre.fi.

The document can be published on the committee's website.

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¹ The Human Rights Centre represents the Finnish National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in international NHRI cooperation and other international and European cooperation in human rights.

The NHRI comprises the Human Rights Centre, its pluralistic 39-member Human Rights Delegation, and the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The institution complies with the UN Paris Principles and the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI) accredited it with A-status in 2014, 2019 and 2025.

Sisällys

Periodic reporting.....	2
Individual communications.....	3
Online services	3
Participation and accessibility.....	4
Resources	4

Periodic reporting

1. Periodic reporting is time consuming for treaty bodies, member states as well as the NHRIs and civil society. Therefore, it is important that the treaty bodies continue **reforming their practices and processes internally**.
2. There is a need for **harmonised procedures** and practises between the committees. This requires cooperation and sharing of best practices. In the end this would assist in clearing the reporting backlog.
3. One of the positive developments in recent years has been the **simplified reporting procedure**. Even if it needs further development, by using this procedure, the committees can make the monitoring more effective. The list of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR) is an excellent way to focus the reporting.
4. However, preparing the LOIPR requires information gathering, also from the NHRIs and civil society. To maximise the number of useful submissions new and more effective **ways to inform** actors on timeframes and **reporting methods** are needed.
5. Unfortunately, at least the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has, **seemingly under financial pressure**, abandoned the new procedure and returned to the old, more complicated and slow procedure. This is not a supportable development. It is also difficult to see how this will provide savings and increase the efficiency of the committee.
6. The simplified procedure has been supported by the Governments but also the NHRIs and the NGOs. The procedure enables faster and more focused examination of the information and the interactive dialogue is more targeted, easing the work of the committee as well as that of the government delegation.
7. **Online-sessions**, as organised during the pandemic, both for pre-sessions, private consultations and constructive dialogue with the government delegation were an excellent, cost saving and enabling procedure.
8. Regarding committees' recommendations and their follow up their **amount, quality and relevance** are important factors. To improve the national implementation of the recommendations and their long-term effect the committees could consider
 - limiting the total amount of recommendations

- considering relevant recommendations by other treaty bodies, UPR etc. to form a uniform view of the human rights problems in the member state
- ensuring continuum by following up on the earlier recommendations on the same topic and the current related developments
- formulating practical recommendations
- harmonising the follow-up that takes place on the initiative of the treaty bodies, including the final stage/letter etc. The NHRI and the civil society actors should also be informed of this stage.

Individual communications

9. Individual communications receive very little **publicity**. This affects the interest/willingness to utilise the expertise within the committees for individual communications. The option for individual communications is rather unknown.
10. It seems that the **procedures**, general **handling** of individual **communications** and the **case management** in general varies depending on the committee. This makes it difficult for parties and creates delays in proceedings. **Harmonising the practicalities** would be cost effective and make the procedures more predictable. This probably requires new tools and solutions but in the long run, this will enhance the effectiveness and visibility of the committees and their valuable work.
11. **Fact sheets and guides on the jurisprudence** and a user-friendly **database of decisions and jurisprudence** should be introduced in order to permit searches for both up-to-date and historical information by different search criteria. This would assist the work of the committees themselves but also Governments and other parties (see also below).

Online services

12. Online services are relevant both for reporting and individual communications.
13. For the reporting and constructive dialogue, the **online review/session** enables larger delegations for the Governments, thus deeper dialogue. It also allows civil society to participate cost-effectively as the costs for in-person participation for one to two days in Geneva is very difficult for many NGOs, and NHRIs.
14. **Online presentation of all documents** relating to reporting and follow-up is vital for the national monitoring and reporting work. Currently the documents are available, but one needs to know the specific session where the Member State in questions has been examined to find the document. This could be improved by creating a country page, which would be easy to find and would include all the committees/processes related to that country. The current pages are difficult to find.

15. Online **database for individual communications** would increase the knowledge of the jurisprudence on individual communications. Currently it is almost impossible to find any information on pending applications, their current state or final decisions in a timely manner. Publishing the work of the committees, including communications, interim measures and admissibility decisions as well as **statistics** per country would be important.

Participation and accessibility

16. The treaty bodies, their functions and the various ways to contribute to their work are considerably unknown, especially to civil society. Consequently, very few actors participate in the reporting process and the monitoring of the national implementation of recommendations by the treaty bodies.

17. To **support and increase the participation** and improve the collection of grass root level information on the implementation of rights in member states the treaty bodies could consider

- providing educational materials on how to participate in reporting cycles in national languages
- unifying and streamlining the procedures, timelines and ways to participate within all the treaty bodies.
- creating a simplified and easily accessible, multi-annual and predictable calendar on the website for the reporting processes, with deadlines, contact details and instructions for submissions.
- enabling on-line participation for civil society and the NHRIs in pre-sessional meetings, private consultations with the treaty bodies as well as the constructive dialogues (NHRIs). Online streaming via UN tv is excellent, but it lacks the interactive possibilities otherwise available for the NHRIs to participate.

18. **Special needs** and challenges, for example disability or long distance to Geneva should be considered in all proceedings of all the treaty bodies. Online-participation is essential for this.

Resources

19. The committees are severely impacted by the OHCHR's financial crisis. The **decrease in human and financial resources** is bound to negatively affect the functioning of the committees in all areas of work. When the sessions are limited, the monitoring system of all human rights treaties is under threat. Also the processing of individual communications risks being delayed severely. This hampers the functioning of the entire system.
