PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS TO CAMBODIA REGARDING CIVIC SPACE

WHAT IS THE UPR?

The **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** is a **United Nations (UN)** mechanism to **review** the human rights records of all UN Member States. The UPR is a **State-driven process**, whereby each State **declares** what **actions** they have taken to **improve** the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations.

Cambodia was reviewed by UPR in January of 2019, where it **received 198** recommendations and **accepted 173** recommendations at the adoption of its UPR outcome at the Human Rights Council 41, in July 2019. This is an **increase of 6%** when compared to the 2nd cycle.

The below recommendations have been accepted by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).

1 Take the necessary measures to allow members of the opposition to participate in Cambodian political life (France).

2 Take all measures to protect and support journalists, human rights defenders, union workers, land and environmental activists and other civil society actors, and members of the political opposition (Iceland).
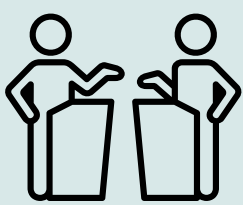
3 Create the necessary conditions to allow all individuals to enjoy their fundamental rights, particularly freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly through reforming the criminal code, especially to protect human rights defenders from prosecution for exercising their fundamental rights under the Criminal Code and the Law on Telecommunications (Costa Rica, Spain).

4 Restore democratic and political space, ensuring participation for political parties, civil society and independent media (Norway).
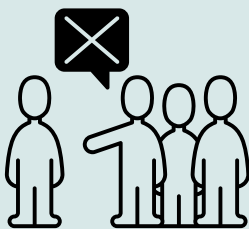
5 Create conditions conducive to free political debate and competition with a view to rebuilding a democracy in which the media and civil society, including human rights defenders, can freely carry out their work without interference or hindrance (Ireland).

6 Strengthen the democratic participation by guaranteeing the independence of the media by establishing a safe and enabling environment for civil society and trade unions and by fostering the full participation of opposition parties in the next communal, senatorial and legislative elections (Canada).

7 Cease all kinds of harassment and arbitrary interference with political opposition, human rights defenders and labour activists, and amend laws and regulations effectively used to limit freedoms of association and assembly, such as certain provisions in the Law on Political Parties, the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations, and the Law on Trade Unions (Finland).

8 Adopt the necessary measures to guarantee the rights of those who work to protect and promote human rights, in particular human rights defenders (Argentina).

AREAS OF PROGRESS

Since receiving the recommendations, the RGC has made progress in the following areas:
- As of September 2021, 47 political parties have registered with the Ministry of Interior.
- The Ministry of Interior has collaborated with UNDP to implement a three-year project to enhance civic engagement, peace building and inclusive dialogue.
- The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training has established a working group to prepare a draft law on the amendment to several articles of the Trade Union Law.

THE WAY FORWARD

Despite such progress, it is recommended that the RGC:
- Continue to review and register new political parties and rehabilitate political rights to individuals who have been banned from political activities.
- Continue to strengthen law enforcement and promote respect for human rights.
Accelerate discussion meetings regarding relevant laws and complete the procedures required for the National Assembly to adopt them.

CCHR reminds the RGC of its human rights obligations under the ICCPR and encourages the RGC to implement all accepted recommendations before the next UPR cycle. CCHR also urges the RGC to reconsider accepting all recommendations marked as noted in the fourth cycle.