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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High  
Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Universal periodic review

# Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the operations of the Voluntary Fund for Participation in the Universal Periodic Review\*


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\* Late submission.

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## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	3
II. Financial situation of the Fund .....	3
III. Activities .....	4
A. Travel to meetings .....	4
B. Training .....	5
IV. Conclusions .....	6

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 16/22 and decision 17/119, in which the Council requested the secretariat to provide an annual written update on the operations of the Voluntary Fund for Participation in the Universal Periodic Review and on the resources available to it. The present report provides an overview of contributions and expenditures as at 31 December 2013, together with a description of activities funded since the previous update (A/HRC/23/61).

## II. Financial situation of the Fund

2. Table 1 shows the detailed financial situation of the Fund as at 31 December 2013 (statement of income and expenditure).

Table 1

**Statement of income and expenditure for the period 1 January–31 December 2013**  
(United States dollars)

<b>I. Income</b>		
Voluntary contributions received from Governments in 2013		338 993.30
Cuba	1 929.50	
Hungary	6 385.70	(€5 000)
Singapore	10 000.00	
Australia	190 300.00	
Germany	130 378.10	
Miscellaneous and interest income		8 245.61
<b>Total income</b>		<b>347 238.91</b>
<b>II. Expenditure*</b>		
Staff costs		0.00
Experts and consultants' fees and travel		0.00
Travel of staff		31 592.14
Travel of representatives		136 873.17
Contractual services		0.00
General operating expenses		0.00
Supplies and materials		0.00
Grants, contributions and seminars		17 139.00
Programme support costs		24 128.57
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>209 732.88</b>
Net excess (shortfall) of income over expenditures for the period		137 506.03
Opening balance 01.01.2013		2 128 622.13
Miscellaneous adjustments/savings/refunds to donors		(100 000.00)
<b>Total fund balance as at 31.12.2013</b>		<b>2 166 128.16</b>

\* Includes disbursements and obligations.

3. Since the establishment of the Fund, a total of 16 countries have made financial contributions with 2013 witnessing further expansion of the donor base.

4. Since the Fund has not enjoyed a predictable pattern of income, substantial resources have been kept as a reserve for future activities, while the Fund, in line with its terms of reference, has been responsive to all requests to enable participation.

### III. Activities

#### A. Travel to meetings

5. Under the terms of reference of the Fund, financial support for travel to meetings is made available for one official government representative from developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to travel to Geneva in order to participate in:

(a) Sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review during which their country is considered;

(b) Plenary sessions of the Human Rights Council during which the outcome of their review is adopted.

6. The Fund also provides for travel of one official representative of developing countries, in particular least developed countries, that are members of the Human Rights Council and do not have a permanent mission in Geneva, to act as rapporteurs (namely, members of the troika).

7. In addition to travel costs, the Fund also provides for the payment of a daily subsistence allowance (DSA) at the rate applicable to Geneva at the time of travel. Under the standing official provisions for such travel, a Government formally requesting this assistance would be advised of the official entitlements for travel and DSA in connection with the required itinerary, which would be reimbursed upon completion of the travel and provision of the necessary supporting documentation. This arrangement, however, proved onerous for many requesting Governments, and as they were unable to submit the claims documenting their travel, they were not reimbursed. In an effort to address this issue, since the seventeenth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (21 October–1 November 2013) the secretariat has arranged to provide the economy class tickets prior to travel and payment of DSA upon arrival in Geneva, thereby alleviating most of the difficulties associated with retroactive reimbursement of expenses.

8. Direct ticketing does, however, require more advance planning as Governments are required to designate their delegate with sufficient lead time to enable the secretariat to make the travel arrangements and issue the ticket in accordance with official travel policies. In cases where such direct ticketing is not possible, the previous arrangement for retroactive reimbursement of travel expenses is still provided.

9. A total of 10 States reviewed in 2013 requested financial assistance for travel to the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review at which they were reviewed. Of these, eight were least developed countries or small island developing States. One State requested financial assistance for travel to attend the session of the Human Rights Council for the adoption of the outcome of its review. Six of the 10 States have already received reimbursement for their expenditures.

10. Table 2 below shows the breakdown of financial assistance and annual expenditures, complete with the amount authorized, status of reimbursement and total commitments to date with regard to the financial assistance provided for the travel of Government delegates to Geneva.

Table 2

**Expenditures for travel of government representatives to attend the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and plenary sessions of the Human Rights Council**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of countries reimbursed</i>	<i>Amount authorized/ pending claim (US dollars)</i>	<i>Amount paid (US dollars)</i>
2008	6	13 280	16 885
2009	17	33 846	23 568
2010	23	46 365	39 942
2011	21	81 778	11698

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of countries reimbursed</i>	<i>Amount authorized/ pending claim (US dollars)</i>	<i>Amount paid (US dollars)</i>
2012	3	12 920	11 295
2013	6	35 176	35 176
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>188 189</b>	<b>103 388</b>
<b>Grand total</b>			<b>291 577</b>

## B. Training

11. The terms of reference of the Fund allow the financing of briefings prior to the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review to assist countries in the preparatory process. These briefings usually consist of plenary segments and break-out group discussions during which the policies, procedures and modalities of the universal periodic review are examined, information is exchanged, and good practices and lessons learned are discussed concerning the organization of national consultations, the setting up of interministerial coordination mechanisms, the drafting of national reports and participation in the interactive dialogues held by the Working Group and the Human Rights Council in plenary session.

12. At the initiative of Mauritius, which was among the group of States advocating increased assistance and support for least developed countries and small island developing States within the framework of the Human Rights Council, a preparatory briefing was organised on 30-31 July 2013 in Mauritius. The seminar focused on methods of work and modalities of engagement of least developed countries and small island developing States with the Council and the universal periodic review. Twenty-three delegates representing 14 countries participated in the event. Fifteen delegates from Mauritius also participated. Together with staff members from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, as well as the Vice-President, member of the Bureau of the Human Rights Council representing the Maldives, participated in the briefing as resource persons.

13. The format of the seminar consisted of presentations followed by questions and answers; as well as a practical exercise simulating interaction between the troika and the State under review immediately after the review in the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review and before the adoption of the report.

14. During the first day of the seminar, general information on the workings of the Human Rights Council and the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review were elaborated upon, while the second day focused on the experience and challenges in preparing for the second cycle of the universal periodic review. The presentations also served as a basis for future guidelines on methodological best practices on conducting national consultations during the process of drafting national reports. Participants also had the opportunity to learn about interventions during the interactive dialogue of the Working Group, as well as about the process of the adoption of the Working Group report during the Council plenary. The objective of keeping the seminar very practical, including through the universal periodic review simulation exercise, was met with appreciation from the participants.

15. The success of this seminar gave way to genuine suggestions by delegations to establish a more stable training facility for small island developing States and least developed countries. It was also proposed to adapt the seminar for French-speaking countries.

16. In December 2013, at the request of the Government of Chile, the secretariat organized a bilateral briefing for the delegation in Geneva following the submission of the national report in advance of its review in the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, which was scheduled for 28 January 2014. The format of this briefing followed the same format as that of regional briefings except that it focused more specifically on the particular areas of interest identified and issues raised by Chile. It also included

presentations on behalf of other parts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in particular those dealing with special procedures, treaty bodies and technical cooperation.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

17. The Voluntary Fund for Participation in the Universal Periodic Review continued to facilitate the participation of developing countries, and in particular least developed countries, in the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review at which they are considered. Assistance has been provided to those same Member States, at their request, to enable them to participate in the adoption of their outcome document by the Human Rights Council at its plenary sessions. In 2013, the Fund was also used for preparatory briefings to facilitate the participation of Member States in the universal periodic review.

18. In order to better facilitate the provision of this assistance, at the request of Member States the secretariat now arranges for the direct ticketing of travel and provides applicable daily subsistence allowances upon arrival in Geneva. This reduces the need for subsequent exchanges of documentation and enables more timely settlement of outstanding obligations.

19. Since the inception of the universal periodic review and the inherent related challenge to ensure that participation is indeed universal, the needs and constraints of least developed countries have been considered. In addition to all other States, ensuring the informed, regular and full participation of States with little resources and no representation in Geneva requires regular outreach activities. In the framework of the briefing seminars organized to assist States to prepare for the review, the secretariat is building on the outcome and format of the seminar held in Mauritius.

20. Furthermore, as a follow-up to the panel discussion in the Human Rights Council on the contribution of parliaments in the work of the Council and its universal periodic review which was held at the twenty-third session of the Council, the organization of a series of regional briefing sessions in 2014 in accordance with resolution 22/15 is currently under discussion with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and sponsoring States.

21. The secretariat is also planning to continue the holding of seminars organized with the International Organization of la Francophonie.

22. In an effort to consolidate information related to the universal periodic review, and on the basis of Human Rights Council decision 17/119, the secretariat will align the timing of submission of the reports on the activities supported through both review trust funds. As such, as of 2015, both annual reports will be submitted to the June session of the Council.

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