



Human Rights Office

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NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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Universal Periodic Review – Nigeria

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a cyclical review process of all 193 UN Member States. Once every four years the human rights situation in each State is reviewed. The State under review declares what action has been taken and the measures to be adopted to improve human rights within the Country. During the UPR, specific recommendations are made by the Member States of the Human Rights Council to the State under review.

On the 23rd of January 2024, Nigeria had its fourth UPR session. The Nigerian delegation was headed by H.E. Mr. Prince Lateef Fagbemi SAN, Attorney General of the Federation and Honourable Minister of Justice and consisted of 10 members from several Government ministries.

The Federal Government of Nigeria accepted 230 out of 290 recommendations made during the previous UPR. In his opening statement, Mr. Prince Lateef gave an overview of the situation within the Country, summing up advances regarding senior citizens, including through the creation of the National Senior Citizen Centre (NSCC), voting rights, gender equality, and torture prevention, as well as the strides made against human trafficking and enforced disappearances. With regard to the legal framework, measures undertaken included the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure domesticated through the Child Rights Act of 2003 in all federal states, as well as the adoption of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015 (VAPP) and the Police Act of 2020. On the contrary, since Nigeria does not support the abolition of the death penalty, no progress has been made since the 3rd cycle in this regard. Furthermore, he highlighted the efforts Nigeria has made to eradicate corruption and prohibit female genital mutilations.

During the interactive dialogue, 132 Member States took the floor and addressed recommendations to Nigeria on issuing a moratorium on the death penalty, continuing efforts to protect women and girls, increasing access to education for children, especially for girls and children with disabilities, eradicating female genital mutilation, ending child, early and forced marriage, and bolstering legislation to fight against human trafficking. There were also recommendations to decriminalize same-sex relationships, address the impacts of climate change, encourage more women to hold decision-making positions, remove restrictions on freedom of expression, and fight against corruption and impunity.

The right to education especially for girls and children with disabilities was a highly emphasised recommendation by the Member States. In the Stakeholders' Summary, there were only 4 recommendations made on education—two of those recommendations were made by a joint submission from IIMA and VIDES together with other NGO partners.

In its responses, the Nigerian delegation highlighted how legislation concerning the death penalty has changed. They stated that if someone sentenced to death is not executed after 10 years, the sentence is changed to life in prison. They also said that the minimum age to get married in Nigeria is 18 years old. Furthermore, they are working with NGOs to raise awareness on child marriage. Regarding freedom of expression, Nigeria remarked that they have the best press freedom in Africa; the only content that is restricted is content that divides the country or promotes violence. As for the credibility of elections, Nigeria reassured the Member States that the credibility of its elections is not a concern. Since 2019, the election body has been made more independent and there has been an introduction of technology for more credible elections. Nigeria also emphasised the work they have done to increase interreligious tolerance through the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council and through specific training for law enforcement officers to better respond to signals of hate and religious violence. Additionally, there is zero tolerance for human rights violations in law enforcement. Concerning the decriminalization of same-sex relationships, Nigeria stated that they are a democracy, and their laws reflect the sentiments of the Nigerian people. Finally, Nigeria is working to combat the displacement of persons, through a committee mandated to help persons displaced by terrorism return to their homes.

In conclusion, Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to protect all persons especially the most vulnerable such as the elderly, women, children, girls, and children with disabilities. Furthermore, Nigeria reiterated its intent to act on all the UPR recommendations given by the other Member States.
