

Dr Phillip Lee MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ

Our ref: 208Lee
Date: 20 December 2017

Dear Minister,

Subject: outcome of the UK's Universal Periodic Review

As I mentioned in our recent meeting, I am writing about the UK's recent assessment by the UN Human Rights Council under its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – the peer review process each member state goes through every five years.

As you know, your Department oversees the UK Government's input into the UPR, and it was your predecessor, Sir Oliver Heald QC MP who led the delegation in Geneva in May 2017. At various points in the process, the Equality and Human Rights Commission met with Sir Oliver and Ministry of Justice officials to convey our recommendations for improvement (I enclose a copy of our UPR report for your information).

We were pleased to see that many of the 227 recommendations the UK received in Geneva aligned with our own analysis, and that of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who wrote to the Foreign Secretary about the UPR in October.

At the adoption of the recommendations in September, I spoke on behalf of all three UK National Human Rights Institutions to express our concern about the absence of clear leadership on the UPR and the domestic human rights agenda from the UK Government. This was both in relation to its engagement with the UPR process, the low number of recommendations that were supported, and the lack of action to fully implement its human rights commitments at home. The Government's overall approach to human rights was the focus of a House of Lords debate on 12 December.

As we now enter the implementation period, I would like to repeat our call for the UK Government to publish a clear action plan setting out what steps will be taken in response to the review. This should also take into consideration the recommendations received from the UN treaty bodies over the last two years, many of which overlap with UPR recommendations. We welcome your Department's commitment to publish two voluntary update UPR reports. However, we support the High Commissioner's call for the UK to establish a national mechanism for comprehensive follow-up and reporting in relation to international human rights obligations.

We therefore consider that these update reports should form part of a coherent strategy to respond to the UPR and treaty body recommendations. We would welcome a statement of the Government's plans in this regard.

The Commission is committed to closely monitoring any progress made in this area, and we are discussing with the Scottish and Northern Irish NHRIs plans to develop an online tool which will allow interested bodies to easily view, search and understand the UN recommendations the UK Government is obliged to act upon.

We have already begun discussions on this with your officials, and look forward to continuing to work cooperatively with them to ensure that this human rights tool can be as effective as possible in protecting and promoting human rights for people in the UK.

Yours sincerely,



David Isaac

Chair

Tel: 020 7832 7874 | **Email:** Philip.swan@equalityhumanrights.com

Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX

 @ehrc   www.equalityhumanrights.com