

# **UN Human Rights Body Begins First-Ever Examination of All Countries' Records**

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The Universal Periodic Review, a new mechanism to examine the human rights record of every United Nations Member State, was launched today at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Over the next two weeks, a first group of 16 countries – starting with Bahrain and Ecuador – will have their records scrutinized, as part of the Review, one of the reforms which differentiate the Council from the Commission on Human Rights, which it succeeded in 2006.

The Review meetings will feature interactive discussions between the States in question and a working group comprises all of the Council's 47 members, according to a UN spokesperson.

The discussions will be based on national reports and information from a variety of sources, including treaty bodies, Special Rapporteurs – independent experts on specific topics that report to the Council – non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions and academics.

Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Czech Republic, Finland, India, Indonesia, Morocco, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Tunisia and the United Kingdom are the other countries being reviewed over the next two weeks.

Under the Review's work plans, 48 countries are scheduled to be reviewed each year, so that the UN's complete membership of 192 countries will be reviewed once every four years.

Last month, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the Council to assure that all countries were scrutinized equally. "The Review must reaffirm that just as human rights are universal, so is our collective respect for them and our commitment to them," he said.

For more details go to UN News Centre at <http://www.un.org/news>