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Dear Dr Phillip Lee MP

The UN Universal Periodic Review of the UK: Acceptance of Recommendations

As civil society organisations, we are writing to you as you prepare to confirm which of the 227 United Nations Human Rights Council's recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) the UK will be supporting on 22 September 2017.

As you know, there is strong civil society interest in the UPR process; the signatories to this letter were part of BIHR's engagement with 175 groups for the Civil Society UPR Shadow Report, and/or submitted their own evidence on human rights in the UK to the UN. The Civil Society Report made over 40 recommendations across a range of issues, many of which are reflected in the 227 UN UPR recommendations.

However, we note that a list was made available on the UN website on 12 September 2017 setting out the UK's approach to the UPR recommendation, and that only 42% are to be supported by the government. We strongly encourage you to accept as many recommendations as possible, and are disappointed that less than half have been supported. It is particularly disappointing that the UK has not supported the UPR recommendations that are relevant to the primary recommendations of the Civil Society Report to guarantee building upon the Human Rights Act, rather than amending or repealing it via a new bill of rights and recognising that the HRA gives effect to a range of international human rights laws (recommendations 134.68 - 134.77). We also note that the UN document references an Annex setting out the government's rationale, but this does not yet appear to be available via the UN nor has it yet been provided to civil society by the government. Finally, we also note the government's commitment to reporting on up to 5 recommendations by May 2018 and mid-term report on all by May 2019.

As civil society groups we urge the UK government to commit to:

- Providing a clear and cogent explanation for which recommendations have been supported and which noted, set out in a report which is disseminated directly to civil society groups it has engaged with and made publicly available on www.gov.uk;
- An implementation plan for how the recommendations will be progressed over the next four and half years, including:
 - a process for better and on-going engagement with civil society across the UK, including in the devolved nations, which enables the monitoring of progress and constructive dialogue using a variety of consultation, involvement and evidence gathering approaches;

- a mid-term report (2019) as part of this implementation plan, not in lieu of it, to assess progress and ensure opportunities for engagement with civil society, and to review any change of position on recommendations not previously supported; and
- consideration of how this links to UN treaty monitoring reporting and implementation of recommendations from those bodies.

The UK has long championed UPR, recognising it as an important international process. We believe taking the above steps are vital in realising the UK's commitment to the UN systems of human rights monitoring, to transparency, and to human rights progress here at home.

We look forward to increased engagement with civil society, working together to ensuring implementation of the UPR recommendations and progress on human rights here at home.

Yours sincerely,

Sanchita Hosali, British Institute of Human Rights
Additional organisations