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COOPERATION BETWEEN STATES & CIVIL SOCIETY ON UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Country research reports for Armenia, Croatia and
Georgia & Toolbox for fostering meaningful cooperation

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UN Human Rights Council membership

Authors: Ivan Buljan, Klara Horvat, Elene Janelidze, Varser
Karapetyan, Arpy Manusyan, Ivan Novosel, Natia
Tavberizde

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INTRODUCTION

This document presents you with the issues of cooperation between civil society and states in relation to UN Human Rights Council membership. First part of the publication consists of research methodology and findings on the experiences in cooperation between civil society and the government in three key countries: Armenia, Croatia and Georgia. The research focused on what were the experiences in cooperation between the two key actors in pre-membership, membership and post-membership phase and it provides the assessment of the quality of such cooperation. Apart from providing cooperation assessment, the research we have undertaken takes the cooperation one step further and investigates how key actors envisage the cooperation in the future and what is the potential of such joint endeavour.

The second part of the document is the toolbox for fostering meaningful cooperation between state and civil society. It builds on the experiences of various actors and is primarily targeted towards civil society organizations. It enables CSOs to assess their political context and define their HRC-related strategy. Definition of the goals of engagement in HRC-matters and setting the goals of such engagement is the key prerequisite for meaningful cooperation with the government. This document provides civil society organizations with various tools they can use in building their strategy and making the cooperation as meaningful and effective as possible.

This publication is published as part of the research and capacity building project CSO-State cooperation in UN HRC membership: toolbox for fostering meaningful cooperation. Special thanks to the Human Rights House Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway that supported the realization of this project. Many thanks to the International Service for Human Rights for providing examples on existing CSO engagement with the HRC. This project is the result of a fruitful cooperation between Human Rights Houses in Zagreb, Tbilisi and Yerevan.



Secretary-General António Guterres (at podium) makes remarks at the opening of the 40th session of the Human Rights Council.
Photo: UN Photo/Violaine Martin.

METHODOLOGY

Research framework

In order to provide an adequate format for the research on the cooperation between states and civil society, it's necessary to determine the framework of the research. Bearing in mind the scope of the research outlined in the introduction, in order to grasp relevant information, the research must take into account the temporal aspect of the cooperation (when is the cooperation taking place) and the difference between what is the actual cooperation and what is the potential for future cooperation between the entities. The research on actual cooperation needs to be assessed in order to determine what the next logical step should be in improving the cooperation i.e. making cooperation more meaningful. The research, therefore, addresses three axis: (a) cooperation phases, (b) cooperation quality, and (c) real vs. potential cooperation.

Cooperation phases

The research is focused on three main phases of the cooperation: (a) pre-membership phase, (b) membership phase, and (c) post-membership phase.

Pre-membership phase. In this phase, we want to find out information about the pre-membership phase. The pre-membership phase refers to the process of preparation of candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council. We are examining three aspects of the preparation process: (a) decision-making

on membership (b) formulation of the membership goals/program (voluntary pledges), and (c) cooperation in the formulation of the membership goals/program (voluntary pledges).

Membership phase. In this phase, we want to find out information about the membership phase. The membership phase refers to the actual 3 years term a country can have in the UN Human Rights Council. We want to find out how the state implemented the pledges (goals) and what kind of cooperation it had with other stakeholders during the implementation (implementation means 3 years term). For the purpose of this research, pledges are differentiated between international and domestic. International pledge refers to actions the state is doing in the seat of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva: voting record, statements, introducing and/or co-sponsoring resolutions, leading on specific issues before the Council, etc. Domestic pledge refers to all of the commitments to improve human rights at home.

Post-membership phase. In this phase, we want to find out information about the post-membership phase. The post-membership phase refers to the period immediately after the end of the 3 years term. We want to find out whether there were any evaluations of the country's membership in the Council, namely: (a) was the country successful in fulfilling the pledges, and (b) how successful was the cooperation with stakeholders.

Cooperation quality

Since the research forms a basis for providing advice for future cooperation between the states and civil society, it is necessary to assess the quality of cooperation. Quality of cooperation can be presented as the intensity of the relations between both actors. Generally, on policy level the cooperation between state and civil society can be of low-intensity meaning they do not engage in any communication whatsoever, nor do they create a policy together. In some cases, the results of both entities can be communicated to others, but this does not serve as a basis for informing policies nor for policy-making, while there can also be a communication between state and civil society in a way that policymakers can take into account the input from the civil society prior or after decision-making on specific matters.

These different types of cooperation have been recognized and determined into three levels of cooperation¹ in management theory. Management theory recognizes the following levels of cooperation when examining effectiveness of civil society organizations: (1) lack of relations - cooperation level in which there is no communication between the entities, (2) communication - cooperation level in which the entities only share relevant information among themselves, and (3) cooperation (strictu sensu) - cooperation level in which entities work together on planning and/or implementing activities.

¹ Szołtysek, Jacek & Wronka, Aldona. 2012. The application of supply chain analysis to the evaluation of the effectiveness of social service organizations. *Management*. 16. 10.2478/v10286-012-0066-9.

Levels of cooperation

1	Lack of relations	No communication between entities. If there is any, it is merely formal.
2	Information	Entities share information between themselves but do not engage in a joint policy-making process.
3	Unequal co-creation / Consulting	Entities engaged in a joint policy-making process but not on equal basis and not in partnership. Less powerful entity engages in some aspects of policymaking.
4	Equal co-creation	Entities engage in joint policy-making on equal basis in terms of a partnership. They are included in every aspect relative to the policy in question.

This theoretical description of the levels of cooperation can be meaningful for examining the effectiveness of cooperation, but it does not fit completely to our needs. Hence, a broader approach to not only effective but quality cooperation is necessary. Quality, for the purpose of this research and thematic it focuses on, does not only include a degree of successfulness in producing a quality output but also the ownership of the process - the sense of being a part of the important process. In this case, the important process would be the policy relating to the membership of the country in the UN Human Rights Council. The state is indeed the one to have full ownership, but the role of civil society in policy making can make policy more grounded in specific needs of the country vis-a-vis human rights, in particular when it comes

to the implementation of domestic pledges. Therefore, the policy that has shared ownership between state and civil society could be of a greater quality level because it could respond to the actual needs of the state regarding human rights. The prerequisite for such greater quality is much more meaningful cooperation in which the state and civil society co-create policy on the UN Human Rights Council and are both engaged in planning and executing the pledges. Therefore, the theoretical three-level model could be expanded by providing additional, fourth level of cooperation, which is the co-creation.

Cooperation between real and potential

The research of the State - civil society cooperation aims at collecting practi-

es of the existing cooperation, but also to explore potential new cooperation modes. Such research therefore addresses the cooperation on the real - potential/ideal continuum.

Bearing the real - potential/ideal continuum in mind, the underlying logic of the research questions requires the research question to provoke reflection on the existing practices and to imagine the ideal modes of practices. Underlying logic of every question is as follows: every question requests the answer consisting of a factual description of undertaken action. If there was an action, we require a description of the action, evaluation of the action and a description of what the ideal action should look like. If there was no action, we proceed with asking about what the ideal action should look like.

Target countries

The research is being implemented in Armenia, Croatia and Georgia, countries in different stages of the membership in the Human Rights Council: Armenia's term started in 2020, Croatia was a member of the Council until the end of 2019, while Georgia completed its 3-years term at the end of 2018. Therefore, not all three countries are eligible for researching all three indicated phases of the State-civil society cooperation. However, due to the dual scope of the research not all questions are suitable for every country, e.g. the questions for the development phase are not suitable for interviewees in Armenia. In such cases, the interviewer asks only about the potential cooperation with civil society.

Sampling

Since the project itself is emphasizing the existing cooperation and new models of cooperation on UN Human Rights Council membership, the identified respondents group contain different relevant respondent groups, namely:

- **Foreign ministry actors.** Foreign ministries are leading actors in carrying out the country's HRC membership. They have essential roles in all of the phases and are charged with planning, proposing, coordinating and executions of actions to achieve country's pledges.

	Pre-membership corporation	Cooperation during membership	Post-membership corporation
Armenia	YES		
Croatia	YES	YES	
Georgia	YES	YES	YES

- **Other governmental actors.** Other governmental actors (e.g various ministries, government offices for human rights, gender equality, etc) are important because the domestic pledges are part of their competence (i.e. implementation of action plan on children's rights are part of the competence of the ministry of social policy).

- **Independent public bodies.** Independent public bodies (e.g ombuds-person) are charged with overseeing human rights in the country and are equipped with knowledge and data to better inform policy-makers on human rights.

- **Non-governmental organizations.** Non-governmental organizations can provide feedback during the formulation of the pledges period, they can monitor the work of the country in the HRC and advocate for a more meaningful achievement and implementation of pledges.

- **Academia.** Experts from academia are equipped with knowledge and empirical data which can advise for the formulation of the feasible pledges based on actual needs, as well as for its implementation.

- **Members of parliament.** Members of parliament are charged with overseeing government actions in the fields of foreign policy and human rights and therefore should be involved in formulation of pledges/goals of the country's term in HRC and its overseeing.

- **UN special mandate holders and relevant UN employees.** Special mandate-holders are residents of the countries that used to or are currently holding UN special mandate: they are crucial for the research because they have knowledge on the work of Council and at the same time they have the knowledge on the situation within the country itself. Apart from the cooperation with the country on membership in the Council, we want them to provide us with a general evaluation of the country's performance in the Council.

The first phase of the research included sampling sub-activity consisting of

identification of the target respondents in each country. The total of 63 respondents were identified in Armenia, 23 in Croatia and 32 in Georgia. Only a portion of potential respondents was selected for the interviews. The selection of the respondents took into account the balance of the different target groups representatives. The target groups which were interviewed were government representatives and NGO's.

Data collection procedure

Since this topic is under-represented in research, the most appropriate data collection method is semi-structured interview. Through semi-structured structured interviews, the smaller number of respondents enable the detailed exploration of the idea of cooperation between State and CSO's in the UN Human Rights Council membership. Such an approach permits freedom to both interviewer and interviewee in case of exploring additional aspects of State-CSO cooperation. Since the

target countries are in different phases of membership, separate questions for the semi-structured interviews were developed in order to reflect each context's possibilities. However, in every country, the questions on how potential cooperation should look like were asked.

ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The UN Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the UN system established by the UN General Assembly resolution in 2006 to promote and protect human rights around the world, address human rights violations and make recommendations on them. The Council has a mandate to discuss all thematic human rights issues that require the attention of the international community. The UN Human Rights Council meets in Geneva and it is constructed as a multilateral forum based on the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and cooperation², with a unique mandate to promote universal protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and address situations of human rights violations.

Membership includes 47 states elected by the UN General Assembly through a secret ballot by a simple majority vote. Members of the Council are elected for three-year terms with one-third of the members being renewed each year. Council membership is based on the equitable geographical distribution of seats according to the following regional breakdown: 13 African States; 13 Asia-Pacific States; 8 Latin American and Caribbean States; 7 Western European and other States; 6 Eastern European States. In addition to the member states of the Council, observers, which include non-member States, inter-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, and non-governmental organizations,

also participate actively in Council sessions.³

Among the Council's subsidiary bodies are the Universal Periodic Review mechanism (UPR), the Special Procedures, the Advisory Committee and the Complaint Procedure. The Council can also establish international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions investigating and responding to human rights violations. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the secretariat for the Human Rights Council. The Human Rights Council meets for at least 10 weeks per year in regular sessions usually taking place in March, June and September. The Council can also convene urgent meetings on short notice to respond to emerging human rights crises. The Council's subsidiary bodies meet for approximately 20 additional weeks each year.⁴

CSOs have an important role in informing the UN Human Rights Council and advocating for meaningful actions to address human rights issues, as well as in utilizing the UN Human Rights Council membership for improving human rights track record in national contexts. The cooperation between States and civil society is of great importance for the overall quality of work of the UN Human Rights Council and to its responsiveness to human rights violations and challenges in national contexts. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness of both public authorities and domestic CSOs about active participation in the

issues related to the work of the Council, enhancing the structured dialogue and contributing to human rights change for the better.

Human Rights Council and Armenia

In October 2019 Armenia was elected for the first time to the UN Human Rights Council for the term of 2020-2022. Armenia was among three countries who presented their candidacies for two vacant seats allocated to the Group of Eastern European Countries (along with Poland and Moldova). Following the secret ballot, Armenia was elected together with Poland in the first round of voting by receiving 144 votes. In course of its membership, Armenia stressed that it will focus on delivering its pledges and commitments in particular by addressing the issues of prevention of genocide and mass atrocities, countering hate crimes targeting ethnic and religious groups, protecting the rights of women and youth, and building peaceful and inclusive societies.⁵

In the frame of HRC's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of human rights records of all UN Member States, Armenia participated in 3 cycles of UPR in May 2010, January 2015 and January 2020. Most recent country reports of Special Procedures related to Armenia include Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child

² United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 60/251, 15 March 2006, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/502/66/PDF/N0550266.pdf?OpenElement>

³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights: Human Rights Council. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/HRC_booklet_EN.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. 2019. Press release: Armenia was elected to the UN Human Rights Council. Available at: <https://www.mfa.am/en/press-releases/2019/10/17/AM4HCR2020-2022/9904>

prostitution and child pornography, Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.⁶⁷

Human Rights Council and Croatia

In October 2016 Croatia was elected for the first time to the UN Human Rights Council for the term of 2017-2019. Following the secret ballot, Croatia was elected for one of the two vacant seats for Eastern Europe Group together with Hungary by receiving 114 votes. In its candidature, Croatia expressed its commitment to strengthening the UN system by emphasizing the protection of women's and children's rights, the fight against discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech, and the effective protection of victims of conflict and crisis as priority areas of its work as a Council member. With regards to its activities within the Council, in 2017 Croatia was the main sponsor of a resolution on conscientious objection in military service which it already sponsored in 2013, as well as a co-sponsor of a number of other resolutions.⁸

In the frame of HRC's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of human rights records of all UN Member States, Croatia participated in 2 cycles of UPR in November 2010 and May 2015. The review of Croatia within the 3rd cycle of

UPR is scheduled for November 2020. Most recent country reports of Special Procedures for Croatia include Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.

Human Rights Council and Georgia

In October 2015 Georgia was elected for the first time to the Human Rights Council for the term of 2016-2018. Following the secret ballot, Georgia was elected for one of the two vacant seats for Eastern Europe Group together with Slovenia by receiving 177 votes.⁹ In its candidature, Georgia pledged to, among others, engage in enhancing the work of the Council, support initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the Council to promote the rights of the most vulnerable groups, with special emphasis on children, women, and internally displaced persons, promote the right to environment, engage in activities of international efforts of sharing experiences and exchanging best practices in

promoting and protecting human rights and work closely with all interested NGOs to increase their representation and participation in international human rights forums.¹⁰ During its membership in the Council, Georgia was the main sponsor of a resolution concerning promoting human rights and sustainable development goals through transparent, accountable, and efficient public services delivery as well as of two resolutions on cooperation with Georgia.¹¹

In the frame of HRC's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of human rights records of all UN Member States, Georgia participated in 2 cycles of UPR in January 2011 and November 2015. The review of Georgia within the 3rd cycle of UPR is scheduled for January 2021. Most recent country reports of Special Procedures for Georgia include Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.¹²

6 Report of the Working Group of Arbitrary Detention. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/enacaregion/pages/amindex.aspx>

7 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/enacaregion/pages/amindex.aspx>

8 Country voting history: Croatia. Available at <https://www.universal-rights.org/country-voting-history-portal/country/?country=Croatia>

9 United Nations. Press release: General Assembly elects 18 members to Human Rights Council, Confirms six states nominated to program and coordination committee. Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/ga11714.doc.htm>

10 UN General Assembly. Note verbale date 1 April 2015 from the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/134

11 Country voting history: Georgia. Available at: <https://www.universal-rights.org/country-voting-history-portal/country/?country=Georgia>

12 Country profile: Georgia. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/ENACARegion/Pages/GEIndex.aspx>

WHAT WAS COOPERATION LIKE? RESEARCH RESULTS FOR TARGET COUNTRIES

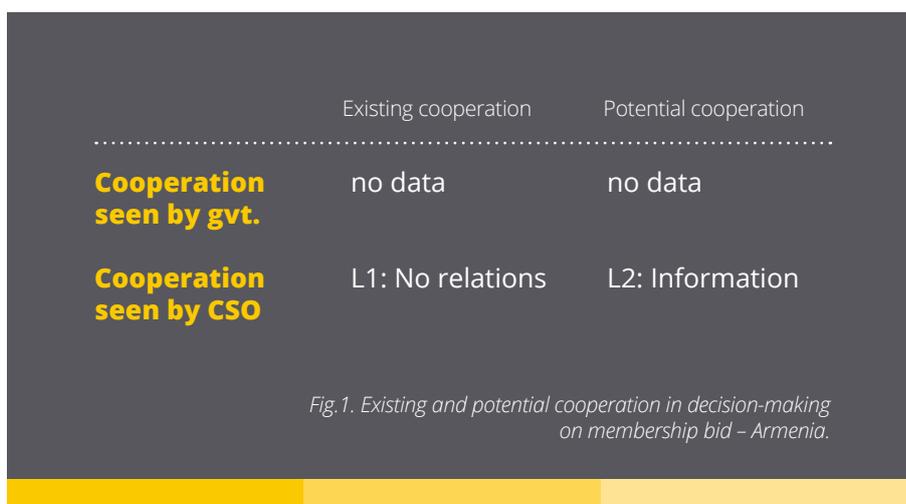
State - civil society cooperation in Armenia

Cooperation during pre-membership phase

Cooperation during the pre-membership phase between State and civil society can be understood as having two consecutive processes: 1. cooperation in processes leading to decision-making on membership bid, and 2. cooperation during the process of formulation of the voluntary pledges. The cooperation is examined in both processes in terms of current and future cooperation.

Decision-making on membership bid. Civil society was not included in the decision-making on membership bid (Fig. 1) for the UN Human Rights Council. Some interviewees responded that they were informed via social media about Armenia's membership in the Council when it occurred and that there were some information leaflets on possible Armenia's membership, but no information was received prior to the decision-making on membership bid. According to MFA, the decision on bidding for the membership in the Human Rights Council was made before the Revolution and the process of making the membership happen was long and demanding.

Civil society stresses the importance of notifying civil society about the decision-making on membership bid that sets the baseline for potential future cooperation. As they emphasize, civil



society could be more demanding towards the government in terms of both Armenia's former and current state commitments. At the same time, some civil society representatives point out that in order to be engaged in decision making processes they should be more proactive.

While the past experience on the cooperation during decision-making on the membership is considered by interviewed civil society representatives as non-existent, the civil society sees the possibility for the future decision-makings to be communicated to the CSOs. Any kind of prior communication will mark the upgrade of the cooperation and will serve as a good starting point for possible meaningful cooperation between state and civil society on these matters.

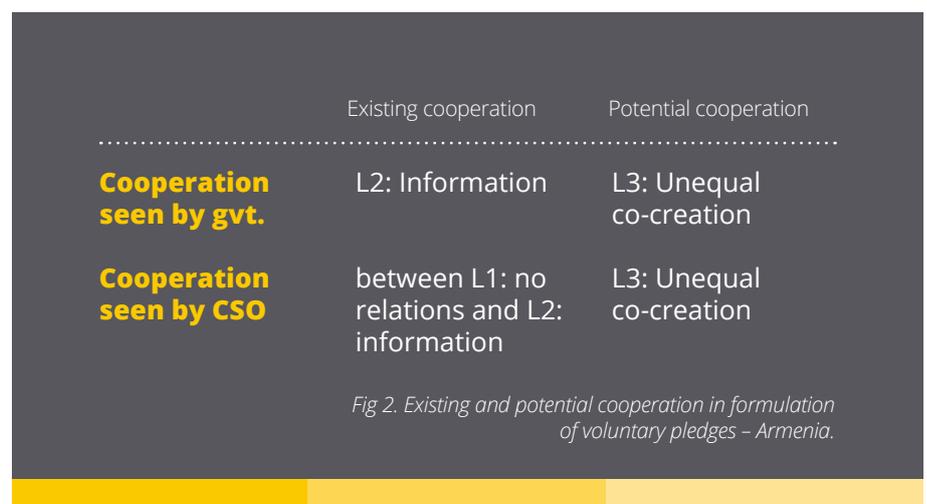
Formulation of voluntary pledges. Public institutions interviewed in this research have indicated that there was a coordinating body and a formal process in which sectoral bodies were included, which discussed the formula-

tion of Armenia's pledges. Wide range of public institutions and bodies were included, such as various ministries, police, etc. The Ombudsperson's Office participated in the process as well as the body responsible for implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy. The MFA is the main coordinating body which has involved other governmental bodies in the formulation of pledges.

Such cooperation between MFA and other governmental actors on the formulation of domestic pledges is considered as beneficial because it integrated more institutions and bodies with different roles and power. This model is transported from the national human rights strategy that does not divide the work by sectors, but rather develops measures to be implemented in order to realise specific human rights. And subsequently engages various public actors the powers and responsibilities of which cumulatively contribute to the realization of the human right in question.

Civil society was engaged in this process (Fig. 2) but its engagement was merely formal and civil society did not bring any content to the formulation of the pledges. The MFA is not aware of the importance of including civil society in the development of pledges, which have been formulated on the basis of existing government policies. This is the case for HRC membership-related policy activities but also for other policy making situations in Armenia. The public institutions respondents did not provide reasons why civil society did not contribute to the formulation of pledges in terms of their content. Their role is seen as participants that bring in the vision and their own agenda. However, despite the alleged engagement of civil society, many CSO respondents indicated that Council membership policy remained unknown to a larger extent.

Public institutions consider that future cooperation should be more meaningful which means that civil society's priorities should be more present in the national agenda. Civil society stressed out the importance of informing the civil society about the membership bid and formulation of pledges. First, if informed, civil society can take time to prepare significant input and use the possible discussion spaces to try to include their human rights priorities on the government's agenda. Civil society should not only engage in cooperation with the state, but it should also monitor what the state is doing. Both stakeholders indicate that there is a necessity for upgrading the cooperation to the level in which the state opens the discussion forum and civil society participates in it, and that the



results of such cooperation are viewed primarily in the increase of civil society input which becomes part of national policy.

Cooperation during the membership phase

Cooperation during the membership phase between State and civil society can be understood as having two consecutive processes: 1. cooperation in processes of planning of the implementation of pledges, and 2. cooperation in the process of an actual implementation of the pledges. The cooperation is examined in terms of future cooperation.

Implementation planning. Public institutions consider planning of the pledge implementation to be difficult as work in the Human Rights Council represents one of many platforms that have similar and intertwined agendas, but planning is definitely important. Planning for implementation of the pledges can occur on all of those platforms which represents the way

in which implementation can have a higher degree of implementability. Public institutions consider that the basis for planning should be a human rights approach and should include various relevant governmental actors under the umbrella of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. MFA indicated that they wish to raise effectiveness of the implementation of the pledges. They have suggested the creation of a national follow-up mechanism in the form of the network of responsible persons from each agency that will monitor the implementation process.

Civil society indicates that all planning activities (Fig.3), not just the voluntary pledge plannings, should be wider in terms of civil society participation. Much more representatives should be included and discussion should be sectorial and on specific topics. Specific importance is paid to sectoral alliances, e.g. alliances and coalitions of organizations working on specific issues such as gender. They can be very beneficial because through them the developed recommendations for planning can re-

flect the ideas of much wider civil society. But before anything happens, there must be awareness raising on what is being done in the context of the United Nations by the country and what is the point of that work, because the UN seems as something very distant. Civil society should not be only engaged, but it should monitor the process and it should develop its own capacities to participate in the planning.

Aside from direct cooperation with the government, it would be beneficial for civil society to develop internal forums to discuss Armenia’s membership, its planning, its implementation, to set up the monitoring system and to plan its own activities the implementation of which would be beneficial for the realization of Armenia’s voluntary pledges.

Both stakeholders indicate the need for activities that will result in the engagement of the civil society in planning activities in a way that the ideas of the civil society are seriously taken into account and that the civil society can have at least partial ownership of the process.

Actual implementation. Public institutions consider civil society participation and engagement in actual implementation as possible (Fig.4). There are different ways in which civil society can be included, e.g. they can be members of a country’s delegations working on various issues, engaging civil society in UN-level platforms that bring together various stakeholders, and by jointly organizing activities which bring ownership to both state institutions and bodies and civil society. In terms of technical aspects of im-

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	non-applicable	L3: Unequal co-creation
Cooperation seen by CSO	non-applicable	L3: Unequal co-creation

Fig. 3: Existing and potential cooperation on implementation planning – Armenia.

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	non-applicable	L3: Unequal co-creation
Cooperation seen by CSO	non-applicable	L3: Unequal co-creation

Fig. 4: Existing and potential cooperation on pledges implementation – Armenia.

plementation, this can be done through online tools which notify responsible bodies on the implementation of specific activities and provide information on the implementation. Since it is open to the public, such online tools can enable other actors (e.g. civil society) to monitor the implementation.

Civil society indicates that the implementation of possible plans or, in case of their absence, the implementation

of the activities that benefit the realizations of the pledges on national level should be monitored by civil society and that the civil society can provide feedback on the implementation. A permanent dialogue with the government should exist and wider civil society can provide feedback and engage in communication with the MFA and relevant bodies. The role of sectoral coalitions and alliances is the same as in the planning of the implementation

of the voluntary pledges on domestic level.

Aside from direct cooperation with the government, it would be beneficial for civil society to develop an internal forum for monitoring membership and to implement the activities that are beneficial for the realization of the voluntary pledges.

Cooperation during post-membership phase

Cooperation during the post-membership phase is understood as the process of evaluation of the implementation of the voluntary pledges. This process is examined in terms of future cooperation.

Public institutions consider that the evaluation of the membership should be performed. It has not yet been discussed, but the process of evaluation should be performed by the coordinating body while other governmental actors should be included in it (Fig.5). They consider that civil society should provide their own evaluation which is not guided by the government, which can serve as the basis for informing future policies. Alternative reports done by civil society are considered as good practice. But governmental reports can be presented to civil society before it is made final and public, in a non-formal format where civil society representatives can provide adequate feedback and recommendations not only for the

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	non-applicable	L3: Unequal co-creation
Cooperation seen by CSO	non-applicable	L2: Information

Fig. 5: Existing and potential cooperation during post-membership phase – Armenia.

content of the government’s report but inform the directions of future policies.

Civil society has not planned the evaluation of the country’s work within the Council, but if they would be engaged in the monitoring and if the visibility of the UN Human Rights Council is raised in terms of its work and its purpose, the evaluation should be done. Aside from the alternative reports, civil society stressed the importance of the discussion spaces on Armenia’s achievements in the Council, but it did not indicate the format of their contribution in the open spaces aside of the discussions that have informative character.

Conclusion

General observance of cooperation between government and civil society is that after the Revolution the coop-

eration of the state institutions with civil society has seen its improvements. Both civil society representatives and MP have emphasized that Armenia’s human rights agenda internally and externally should not differ from each other. In particular when Armenia has the role in the UN Human Rights Council. This forum should not be used by Armenia only for promoting genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh agendas. Many respondents from both civil society and the government have indicated the need to raise human rights standards in Armenia in particular at the point when Armenia has the role in the Council. The UN Human Rights Council is still a new forum for both the government, civil society and other stakeholders and the country’s actions should be more concrete and its work needs to be organized.

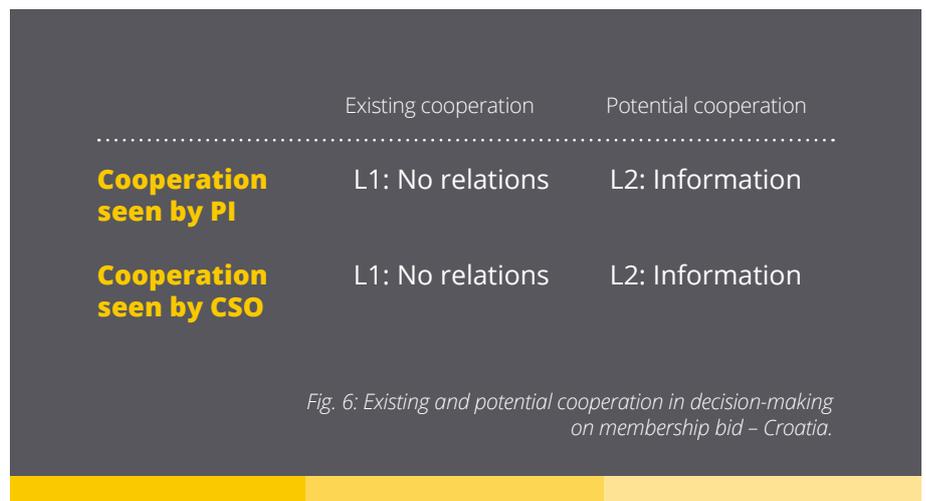
State - civil society cooperation in Croatia

Cooperation during pre-membership phase

Cooperation during the pre-membership phase between State and civil society can be understood as having two consecutive processes: 1. cooperation in processes leading to decision-making on membership bid, and 2. cooperation during the process of formulation of the voluntary pledges.

Decision-making on membership bid. From the information received by the MFA, the membership bid was lobbied for in the frame of bilateral visits of state executives as well as on consultations with other countries and UN meetings when topics of multilateral cooperation and work of the UN were on the agenda. Croatian permanent missions in Geneva and New York were active in advocacy and search for support. Croatia has a standing invitation for all thematic procedures and UN rapporteurs within the Human Rights Council. The whole diplomatic network was involved in active lobbying and a brochure was published stating out the priorities for the membership.

According to the information received by the CSOs, civil society was not included in the decision-making on membership bid for the UN Human Rights Council (Fig.6). Some interviewees were aware of the preparation of the membership bid from sources other



than the MFA, but no information was received prior to the decision-making on membership bid.

CSOs stressed the importance of notifying civil society about the decision-making on membership bid which would set the baseline for potential future cooperation. Interviewed civil society representatives agreed that there was no inclusion of CSOs into preparation of the membership bid.

Following some recent developments regarding the involvement of CSOs in the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review, some interviewees expressed intention to continue such cooperation on future matters when it comes to UN human rights protection mechanisms.

Formulation of voluntary pledges. The MFA has indicated that lobbying strategy and drafting of pledges was

coordinated by the MFA in close cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders. It stated that in that period relevant state bodies have actively cooperated with representatives of civil society and stressed that civil society representatives are members of various intersectoral working groups in the field of human rights, especially with regards to the UPR process.

From the CSO point of view, civil society did not participate in the formulation of the pledges (Fig. 7), but during that period they have participated in many public consultation processes on various topics within their scope of work. Such consultation often included areas covered by the pledges which include, but are not limited to, asylum seekers and persons under international protection, humanitarian law issues, combatting the violence against women etc., however without clear indication that this is in any way linked to HRC candidature and pledges presented therein. Civil society concludes that it did not bring any content to the formulation of the pledges.

Civil society considers that it shall be better informed about UN human rights protection mechanisms and more involved in their implementation. Civil society is of the opinion that the government did not make the candidature visible enough and include all the relevant stakeholders in this process. As civil society has a direct insight into human rights violations and a first hand experience, it considers that it shall be thoroughly consulted in order to provide input on a certain problem from a different viewpoint.

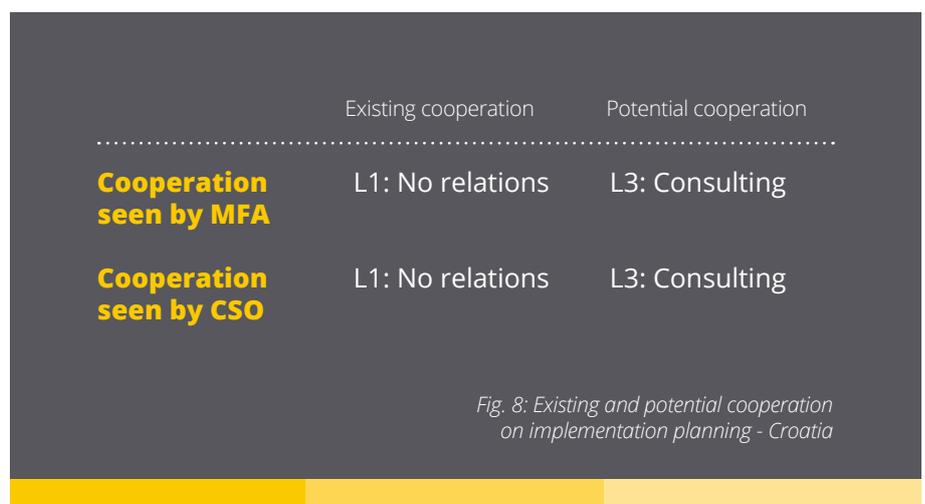


Fig. 8: Existing and potential cooperation on implementation planning - Croatia

Cooperation during membership phase

Cooperation during the membership phase between State and civil society can be understood as having two consecutive processes: 1. cooperation in processes of planning of the implementation of pledges, and 2. cooperation in the process of an actual implementation of the pledges.

Implementation planning. According to the information provided by the MFA, in the context of promoting and protecting human rights Croatia has different national documents which include both strategies and (implementation) action plans in a number of areas. In drafting these documents all relevant bodies are guided by the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms, in particular the recommendations received by Croatia during the UPR process, but also by the given voluntary pledges and commitments. In addition, it has noted that the new Draft National Program for the Protection and Promotion of Human

Rights includes measures concerning both the UPR recommendations and voluntary pledges and commitments.

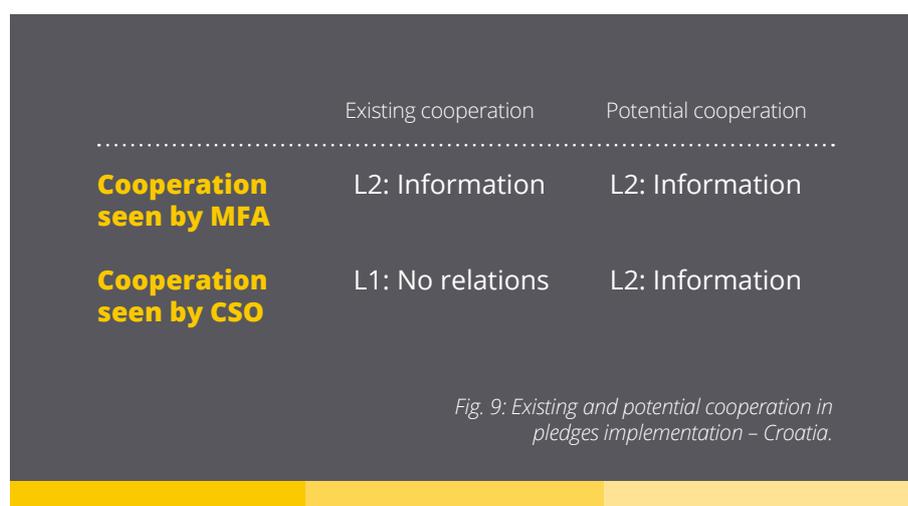
Even though civil society organisations were not directly involved in implementation planning regarding pledges and commitments, they were aware of the existence of certain action plans which cover topics from the pledges and commitments and they were involved in their preparation (Fig. 8). However, many of such action plans expired and new ones were not adopted or they were adopted before the membership. According to their opinion, planning the implementation of pledges shall include intersectoral dialogue which would enhance the implementation plan and provide for a realistic solution. Action plans could be created with participation of civil society members in order to use them as a help towards achievement of all the goals set by the membership.

Government actors shall involve all the relevant stakeholders in creation of strategic plans including public

institutions, independent human rights institutions and civil society organisations. Intersectoral dialogue on the formulation of pledges would be the optimal solution to create a thorough and complete action plan to tackle all the existing obstacles. Ombudsinstitutions may strengthen their efforts to communicate to civil society that they are open to cooperation and that their inputs are welcome. Their regular cooperation with civil society could easily be expanded to cooperation on monitoring the Human Rights Council membership. Independent institutions encourage civil society to reach out to them even more often than they currently do since they are open to expanding their cooperation, but are often limited by capacities.

Actual implementation. The MFA regularly cooperates with all the competent authorities, i.e. ministries and government offices, in the implementation of given pledges and commitments, in particular with regard to foreign policy and cooperation with international actors. For example, cooperation with competent authorities in the context of the UPR process is particularly intensive and their opinions are crucial for the adoption of UPR recommendations and their effective implementation.

The MFA is of the opinion that civil society was consulted with regards to implementation of pledges and commitments given that the pledges and commitments are part of the regular activities of the competent authorities which, within their scope of activities, communicate with civil society through consultations, conferences, roundtables and public consultations with



the interested public. The MFA again reminded of the UPR process, whose many aspects are being considered in cooperation with civil society through monitoring their shadow reports and organizing an interactive dialogue on the preparation of the Croatian UPR report in order to include civil society contributions.

According to the MFA, structured dialogue and consultations with civil society before Council sessions is implemented through communication of the permanent mission of the Republic of Croatia in Geneva with civil society organizations, which is open and intensified before and during each Council session (Fig.9). It also emphasized that Croatia, in line with its pledges provided for membership in the Council, has supported valuable contributions from civil society organizations as well as from national human rights organizations to the work of UN bodies and agencies.

When it comes to the viewpoint of independent human rights institutions,

implementation of certain pledges was monitored through following certain topics that the institution regularly follows. It is possible that implementation of pledges was indeed within the scope of those topics, but they did not specifically monitor the implementation of pledges and commitments as such.

From the view of CSOs, civil society actors could be included in the implementation phase as an advisory element which has a direct, first-hand insight into human rights issues of everyday life through public consultations, meetings with civil society and constructive dialogue. Government's agenda on the Council shall be shared with relevant stakeholders in Croatia in order to gather their input and improve the agenda points. Regular consultations with CSOs would be one of the possibilities since the interviewed CSOs stated a complete lack of such consultation so far.

Cooperation during post-membership phase

Cooperation during the post-membership phase is understood as the process of evaluation of the implementation of the voluntary pledges. This process is examined in terms of future cooperation.

The MFA has stressed that it regularly prepares preparatory materials for their actions on human rights forums and, in that sense, consults competent bodies and publishes reports and analyses. It has emphasized that the actions of the Republic of Croatia as well as other members and actors of the Human Rights Council is public and therefore may be reviewed irrespective of their publications. The MFA stated that the evaluation of the membership is conducted successively through regular activities and in coordination with the permanent mission of the Republic of Croatia in Geneva. The MFA also added that through further consultations with civil society it is open to assessment of all questions referring to action of the Republic of Croatia in the field of human rights, including the assessment of its role within the Council. The MFA also states its intention to encourage participation of Members of Parliament in open and critical discussion related to the assessment of Croatian membership in the Council.

As far as the interviewed members of civil society are aware of, there will not be any government follow-up on the membership. However, recently conducted activities on UPR and a meeting held with civil society in that regard could indicate that there is a

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	non-applicable	L3: Consulting
Cooperation seen by CSO	non-applicable	L3: Consulting

Fig.10: Existing and potential cooperation in post-membership phase – Croatia.

chance to organize follow-up activities in relation to the Council membership as well. CSOs do not plan to conduct any specific monitoring unless invited to do so by the relevant government actors. Civil society actors could be involved in an evaluation process on the membership in order to get a better overview of its efficiency as well as guidance for future similar occasions (Fig.10). A platform could be established which would monitor the activities conducted within the membership and report on them as well as advocate for improvements.

Independent human rights protection institutions encourage CSOs to take the initiative and reach out to them whenever they find it relevant. They are open to strengthening their cooperation and would appreciate civil society members to take the initiative and contact them for further cooperation. Ombuds institutions may strengthen their efforts to communicate to civil society that they are open to cooperation and that their inputs are welcome.

Conclusion

Cooperation between government and civil society on HRC-related matters in Croatia can be described as insufficient. Views on the cooperation between civil society and government are diverging. While in some cases MFA sees the cooperation more intensive, as in the case of the formulation of the pledges, civil society views it as lacking a more structured dialogue. General observance on cooperation between government and civil society is that the existing cooperation may be improved through intersectoral cooperation and that CSOs shall get more familiarized with UN topics and mechanisms in general. Considering that UN topics are largely underrepresented among Croatian civil society, their understanding of UN human rights protection mechanisms shall be broadened and their participation improved.

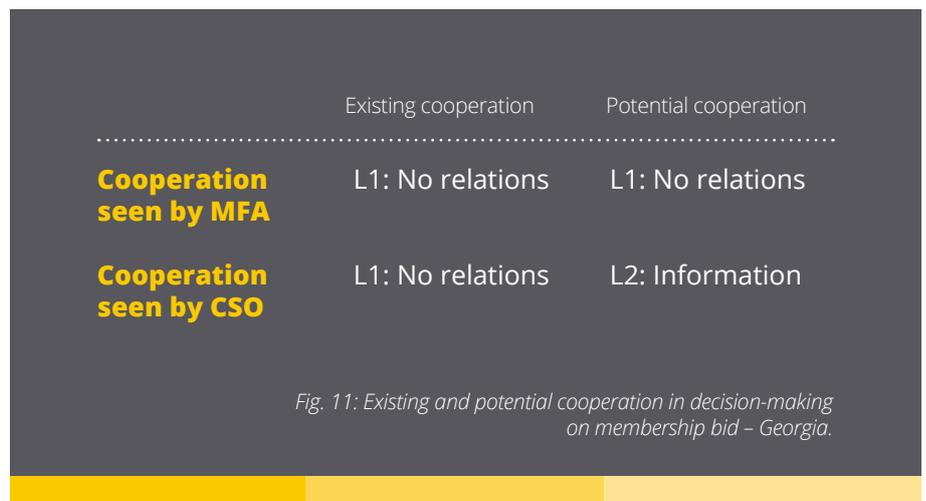
State - civil society cooperation in Georgia

Cooperation during pre-membership phase

Cooperation during the pre-membership phase between State and civil society can be understood as having two consecutive processes: 1. cooperation in processes leading to decision-making on membership bid, and 2. cooperation during the process of formulation of the voluntary pledges. The cooperation is examined in both processes in terms of current and future cooperation.

Decision-making on membership bid. Decision on the bid for the membership in the UN Human Rights Council was made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. Decision was made in consultations with other governmental agents and bodies. Georgian MFA understands itself as a central authority in the process of decision-making on membership bid, while other relevant actors to be included in decision-making are other public bodies such as the Ministry of Justice.

It does not regard other non-governmental actors as relevant for decision-making (Fig.11). Therefore, MFA did not include civil society in decision-making nor were any consultations held to that purpose. Such a position of MFA was confirmed by civil society.



Other relevant actors, such as the ombudsperson office, parliament and academics were not included in the membership bid. Academia does not have a clear idea on how it could participate in the decision-making.

Formulation of voluntary pledges. Voluntary pledges were formulated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice. MFA does not see any other relevant actor that should participate in the process of formulation of the pledges.

The same position applies to cooperation with civil society (Fig.12). MFA does not regard other non-governmental actors as relevant for formulation of pledges. This is the main reason why MFA did not include civil society in the formulation of pledges nor were any consultations held to that purpose. Such a position of MFA was confirmed by civil society. Contrary, civil society understands that, despite it being non-existent, there should be cooperation between state and CSOs

so that CSOs can monitor what the country is doing and exercise pressure on the government to use formulation of the pledges as a sign of commitment to improving the human rights in the country. Thus, civil society does not see themselves as actors that participate in specific activities together with the MFA and other actors, but their role is seen as providing relevant information to the decision-makers on what should be priority in human rights that would transform in the pledges.

Independent public bodies, such as ombudsperson, were not included in formulation of pledges, nor other actors such as parliament and academia. Academia considers itself as valuable for the formulation of the pledges because it can offer consulting services in terms of providing documents and rationale for the pledges.

Cooperation during membership phase

Cooperation during the membership phase between State and civil society

can be understood as having two consecutive processes: 1. cooperation in processes of planning of the implementation of pledges, and 2. cooperation in the process of an actual implementation of the pledges. The cooperation is examined in both processes in terms of current and future cooperation.

Implementation planning. No implementation plans were developed. MFA considers them as impossible to be created since the work in the Council is dynamic. It defines at the same time Council work as dynamic and “formed based on the initiatives of the states for each session” neglecting the fact that its initiatives should be based on implementation plans i.e. the possibility, even the obligation to transform its implementation of plans into initiatives in the Council. Since the implementation of the planning did not happen, there were no opportunities to cooperate with the civil society in this matter. Contrary, civil society demands such plans to be developed in a strategic way. Such documents should have clear and measured outcomes. Civil society does not consider itself as part of the implementation planning (Fig 13).

Independent public bodies did not participate in the implementation planning for the voluntary pledges but considers such planning as important for their own work in promoting human rights in Georgia. Academia was not included in this process, but in an ideal situation it should be included in planning of the implementation, together with civil society organizations. According to academia feedback, implementation plans should exist and

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	L1: No relations	L1: Information
Cooperation seen by CSO	L1: No relations	L2: Information

Fig.12: Existing and potential cooperation on formulation of voluntary pledges – Georgia.

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	L1: No relations	L1: No relations
Cooperation seen by CSO	L1: No relations	L2: Information

Fig. 13: Existing and potential cooperation on implementation planning - Georgia

they should provide concretization of the pledges in order for them to be implemented.

Actual implementation. Regarding the actual implementation of the pledges, Georgian MFA completely disregards the domestic pledges i.e. the priorities to be implemented in Georgian jurisdiction, even though there are pledges to be implemented at national level, such as promotion of the right to envi-

ronment and ratification of several international and regional human rights instruments. MFA sees the civil society role in the actual implementation of the pledges as participants of the activities (i.e civil society to participate in side-events and discuss resolutions) in Geneva. Civil society confirmed that there was no cooperation with the state regarding the implementation of the pledges.

Civil society did not monitor nor cooperate with the state on the implementation of the pledges. It considers itself as part of the implementation of the pledges but not as an active participant in the implementation of specific activities, but rather as the watchdog monitoring of the implementation.

There should be an open space for civil society to push for the implementation of their ideas, but it implies that the implementation should be the sole responsibility of the government. Such open space for civil society and government's dialogue should be performed by the government's human rights secretariat, as indicated by CSO's (Fig 14). Academia also opts for the existence of such space, in the form of the advisory body. Such a body has a more informative role for the government and would not represent more meaningful cooperation, but it would still represent a significant step forward from the current situation.

Independent public bodies did not participate in the implementation of the pledges but have expressed wishes to be informed about the ongoing implementation of the pledges on a regular basis. Academia was not included in the implementation, but its expertise can be beneficial for the state since academia can help with resolutions and can provide information valuable to make national policies more effective.

Cooperation during post-membership phase

Cooperation during the post-membership phase is understood as the process of evaluation of the implementation of

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	L1: No relations	L1: Information
Cooperation seen by CSO	L1: No relations	L2: Information

Fig. 14: Existing and potential cooperation on pledges implementation - Georgia

	Existing cooperation	Potential cooperation
Cooperation seen by MFA	L1: No relations	L1: No relations
Cooperation seen by CSO	L1: No relations	L2: Information

Fig. 15: Existing and potential cooperation during post-membership phase - Georgia

the voluntary pledges. This process is examined in terms of both current and future cooperation.

The position of Georgian MFA is aligned with the position regarding previous phases. The Ministry publishes a yearly report on the work of the Ministry itself which contains the information about its work within the UN Human Rights Council. It implements its internal evaluation of the

membership. Such evaluation is used for informing the policy in the upcoming periods, but the evaluation results are not disclosed to the public. MFA considers lack of interest for UN HRC membership by civil society as one of the reasons why such evaluation results are not public. MFA did not include CSOs in evaluation, nor it plans to do so (Fig.15).

Civil society organizations did not participate in the evaluation process of the Georgian membership in the Council. Ideally, they consider that an evaluation of the membership should exist and that the information should be made public in order to make the government more transparent and accountable for its work. Civil society considers that in the future cooperation, if realized, both state and civil society should do the evaluation of its work so that the national policy could be improved. The Human Rights Secretariat can be seen as participating in the evaluation report, since it performs analysis of various other actions on human rights.

Independent public bodies were not included in the evaluation, but positioned themselves as prone to the existence of such a document but do not see themselves as part of the evaluation process. They are more prone to working with NGOs and helping them on their own report. Academic was not included in the evaluation, but considers that the primary responsibility for the cooperation between state and

non-governmental actors should be on non-governmental actors because the state is unlikely to engage if there is not interest. The position of the academia is that the state should do the evaluation and inform the public.

Conclusion

Regarding the cooperation between state and civil society regarding the membership in the UN Human Rights Council, the position of the state has been consistent throughout the phases of the membership. MFA considers that it has the sole responsibility over the matter relating to the Council membership and that the civil society is not interested in the Council matter nor it is important to engage civil society in membership policy. On the other hand, the position of the civil society indicates the lack of relations it had with the state. Civil society considers Council membership as an important aspect of Georgia's work on improving human rights at home and they wish to participate in such a process but not as active creators but rather in the watchdog function. Civil society is opet

for communication with MFA and for provision of information about priorities to be implemented in the national context regarding human rights. However, the implementation of possible jointly developed measures is the sole responsibility of the government.

Among the two stakeholders, civil society is more open towards cooperation and watch to develop the current status of no-relations to the state in which both government and civil society can inform themselves and communicate their views on specific Council-related matters. This represents an important step forward that aims at building the understanding between the two entities that in the future has the possibility of the develop itself into a more meaningful cooperation in which the state will develop policies taking into account needs and priorities of civil society, while CSOs will be included in the implementation of some of the measures and policies.

HOW TO IMPROVE COOPERATION? TOOLBOX FOR ACHIEVING MEANINGFUL COOPERATION

In the previous chapters, we have investigated the cooperation between civil society and government on HRC-related matters by dissecting the phases of cooperation. Different stages of cooperation were scrutinized on cases of Armenian, Croatian and Georgian membership in the UN Human Rights Council. The following chapter turns the HRC-related cooperation upside down: instead of evaluating, it provides you with tools on how to improve cooperation between civil society and government.

The toolbox on meaningful cooperation provides recommendations (tools) on how to improve the government - civil society cooperation on HRC-related issues. Since our intention is to make this toolbox applicable to different contexts, the recommendations, accompanied by tips, suggestions, and good practice examples, are serving not as guidelines to clear the path for improvement but rather as blocks to build specific strategies on improving the state-CSO cooperation. Organizations with intentions of working on HRC-related issues in their home country can assess which tools are the most suitable in their context and use them to formulate their own strategic approach to this issue. The tools provided here are not exhaustive, nor the activities we suggest to take into consideration are the only applicable ones. Civil society organizations are those in charge of shaping their own strategies.

However, it is important to have in mind that although the tools we can use in different contexts may vary, there are still some specific goals that should be present in every strategic

approach. Both governmental and CSO actors should demonstrate a will for mutual cooperation, while the civil society should use the membership process to put on the agenda and push for advancing domestic human rights record. This goal can only be reached if membership is understood as a joint endeavor, where both actors deepen paths of cooperation and preserve autonomy in executing their respective roles and responsibilities.

Pre-membership phase

The pre-membership phase is crucial for setting the tone and quality of the cooperation between the government and civil society for the upcoming years of the membership. During this phase, civil society and human rights defenders should:

- advocate the government to submit the country's voluntary pledges for its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council;
- aim to participate in the formulation of voluntary pledges that reflect the actual needs and provide tangible solutions for human rights violations, concerns, and challenges.

This phase could be divided into two subsequent phases: (a) cooperation in the process leading to decision-making on membership bid, and (b) cooperation during the process of formulation of voluntary pledges.

Decision-making on membership

The civil society could encourage the government to consider applying for membership and to be vocal and active about the possible benefits of the membership on the domestic human rights developments. By being proactive, CSOs could position themselves as key stakeholders in any future decision-making on the membership. This would provide an opportunity to have a stronger influence over the agenda-setting, e.g. by bringing forward human rights issues and topics the government would probably not want to address because they are controversial, costly to resolve, etc.

- **#1: Build a civil society coalition**
 - Identify and engage other human rights defenders active around the Human Rights Council and initiate collaboration. Create a platform or a network of organizations willing to work together on the Human Rights Council. Include different types of organizations and human rights defenders active in various fields of rights protection, e.g. women human rights, rights of national minorities, civic and political rights, social justice, LGBTI+ rights, environmental rights, etc.

Ad hoc UPR coalition

Human Rights House Zagreb has a long tradition of ad hoc UPR coalitions. HRHZ reaches out to different human rights organizations working in various fields such as women rights, LGBT, national minority rights, etc. bringing them together in work-

ing on joint advocacy. The output of the ad hoc coalition is a shadow report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council.

Platform 112

Platform 112 is a coalition of 71 Croatian NGOs engaged in human rights, democracy, peace building, tackling corruption and protecting public resources and the environment. Since 2011 it has been working as a collaborative platform advocating for public policies to be based on social justice, human rights and rule of law. Platform is active during the pre-election period, organizes talks with political parties and assesses the quality of their programs.

➤ #2: Learn from others

- Reach out to international civil society organizations to get information on examples of good practice of HRC membership. Get in touch and network with civil society organizations from other countries to learn about their experiences and activities around the membership.

ISHR pledging event

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) organizes every year a pledging event with Amnesty International for all candidate States to the HRC. The event provides an opportunity for States to present their pledges and for civil society to ask their State representative questions about their commitments. ISHR also prepares every year score-cards for each candidate State and encourages them to improve their score, such as ratifying all international human rights treaties, responding to Special Procedures' communications and visit requests.

➤ #3: Reach out and engage stakeholders

- Engage with other stakeholders in order to foster public debate on the possibility for a country to apply for membership and an opportunity this creates for improving human rights record domestically. Reach out to the national human rights and other independent institutions, academics and researchers, parliamentarians, etc., and encourage them to become active. Organize roundtables, panel discussions, and similar events with academia and human rights institutions.
- Engage with media and journalists and communicate with the public about the Human Rights Council membership and benefits it could have on the human rights situation in the country.

Nepal case

Activists in Nepal reached out to media ahead of the re-election of Nepal to the HRC to share their reflections about their country's human rights record during their term.

Formulation of the goals of the membership

HRC membership gives an opportunity to make domestic human rights issues more visible and implementation of the solutions more tangible. International scrutiny is an instrument human rights organizations could utilize for the benefit of their advocacy work. HRC membership provides an opportunity for civil society to influence

the content of the state's candidature, primarily to participate in the formulation of the voluntary pledges and commitments the government is presenting to the UN member states. This provides an opportunity to shape the government's human rights agenda for the upcoming three years.

➤ #1: Conduct wide and inclusive CSO consultations

- Build on the previously established cooperation and networks and proactively start preparing civil society's priorities for the HRC membership. Include a wider range of human rights defenders and their organizations to cover a variety of different human rights issues.

Public consultations on the priorities of the 2020 Croatian presidency over the Council of the European Union

In the preparation for Croatian EU presidency, civil society has decided to develop its own priorities for the presidency in order to offer it to the Government and start a dialogue on the country's priorities. Civil society organizations have engaged in public consultations aiming at formulation of the priorities for the 2020 Croatian presidency over the Council of the European Union. Consultations were organized by CROSOL and GONG. Consultations were held both online and offline and had the scope to identify areas and problems important for the democratic and sustainable development of the European Union and to influence the Croatian government to take the identified problems into consideration for the presidency priorities. Consultations were based on the thematic analysis of important policy areas

such as Brexit, MFF, single digital market, EU elections, EU values protection, European democratic governance, energy safety and sustainability and EU enlargement. The public was invited to comment on the proposed policy areas, as well as to suggest additional policy areas that they considered as requiring the Council's attention. Consultations were held online and offline and the output of the process was the proposal of the civil society priorities for the Croatian presidency of the Council of the EU.

- Engage in consultations with other CSOs and human rights defenders and their organizations working outside of the capital or bigger urban areas to get their viewpoints and input.

Public consultations on the priorities of the 2020 Croatian presidency over the Council of the European Union

During the consultations process, CROSOL and GONG reached out to the public and civil society outside of the capital through online and offline means. Total of 4 consultation events were organized in Split, Osijek, Rijeka and Varaždin, while the online consultations were available to citizens and civil society organizations throughout the country. The combination of the consultation methods enabled a wider outreach and inclusion of non-governmental organizations that work in different areas of human rights to provide their input.

➤ #2: Learn from others

- Consult with international NGOs and civil society organizations from other countries and use good practices and their experience to strengthen your own advocacy.

➤ #3 Engage in dialogue with decision-makers

- Present CSO priorities for the HRC membership to the public and the government and engage in a dialogue with the decision-makers.

➤ #4: Advocate for quality and informed process of formulating pledges

- Insist that civil society organizations working on a variety of human rights issues are included in the government-led candidature preparation process, particularly the formulation of voluntary pledges and commitments.
- Insist that the formulation of voluntary pledges and commitments is based on sectoral analysis, measurable results, and clear indicators, i.e. insist that the process is based on the standards of the public policy creation.
- Inform, consult, and seek input from the wider community of human rights defenders during the participation in the government-led process of the creation of the candidature.

Membership phase

During this three-year-long period, both the government and civil society should focus on the implementation of voluntary pledges and commitment, both domestically and internationally. Civil society should:

- advocate for the government to create and implement policy measures aiming at achieving pledges and commitments as a sign of its dedication to international human rights commitments;
- actively monitor the state's activities, both at home and in Geneva, and hold the government accountable vis-a-vis implementation of its obligations.

The implementation should be planned and systematic, and based on inputs from a variety of stakeholders. This phase could be divided into two intertwined parts: 1. cooperation in processes of planning of the implementation of pledges, and 2. cooperation in the process of an actual implementation of the pledges.

Planning the implementation

In order to achieve proclaimed goals of the HRC membership a country should have an implementation plan. In the process of planning the implementation of voluntary pledges, human rights defenders and their CSOs should:

- advocate the government for the adoption of the implementation plan;
- aim to participate in the process of planning through insisting on the sectoral representation of human rights defenders and their organizations.

Primarily, the plan for the implementation of the pledges and commitments is an important guarantee the government will take concrete actions to

improve the domestic human rights record, and is an important tool for CSOs to monitor policy effectiveness of proposed measures.

➤ **#1: Advocate for participative creation of implementation plan**

- Advocate for the adoption of the comprehensive implementation plan of voluntary pledges and commitments. The overall plan or annual plans should cover the whole three years and present measures and bodies responsible for their implementation.
- Insist on the inclusion of the human rights defenders and their organizations in the development of measures and implementation planning

➤ **#2: Encourage public participation**

- Encourage public consultations and broad discussion on draft plans and other related documents.

Implementation of the voluntary pledges and commitments

Implementation of the pledges should be carried out according to the general implementation plan which should be made operational on an annual basis. CSOs should insist on regular supervisions and revisions of annual action plans in order to be relevant and answer to real needs. Human rights defenders and their organisations should regularly monitor the implementation of measures across different sectors and inform governmental actors about

their results and encourage them to adjust proposed action measures. It is crucial for CSOs to maintain their informal networks and enhance mutual cooperation and coordination in order to maximize its influence towards the government.

➤ **#1: Monitor plan implementation**

- Closely monitor the implementation of voluntary pledges, prepare periodic reports and communicate your concerns and recommendations to the authorities regarding the implementation plan.

Meetings with Australian MFA

Human Rights Law Center (Australia) together with HRC-net members lobbied the Australian Foreign Ministry through meetings in capital and in Geneva and Coalition letters, urging them to implement Australia's pledge to "take leadership on country situations when human rights criteria are met" to push for its implementation, resulting in Australia leading a joint-statement on Saudi Arabia at the HRC in September 2019.

Civil society meeting at Geneva

Several Council members hold meetings ahead of every HRC session with civil society at home and in Geneva to present their priorities and hear civil society's recommendation. Civil society in some countries coordinates itself by convening pre-meetings to share information with grass roots organizations and discuss priorities and strategies, to ensure their meaningful contributions in the government-convened meetings. Others have organized trainings for civil society to enable them to mean-

ingfully engage in the processes, including providing funding schemes to participate in the Council's sessions.

➤ **#2: Build the capacities of human rights defenders in monitoring and implementation of the plan**

- Strengthen your CSOs networks and enhance competencies of human rights defenders from different sectors to engage with a variety of different governmental actors regarding the implementation of voluntary pledges.

Create and realize CSO capacity building programs

Use the opportunity of HRC membership to build a coalition but also reach out to other organizations. Organize series of education activities for NGOs on UN Human Rights Council across your home country and engage various activists. Make them aware of the implementation plan for the voluntary pledges and organize education activities to develop skills and knowledge and how to effectively monitor the implementation. This way you will gain valuable partners and raise awareness on the importance of UN Human Rights Council.

➤ **#3: Advocate for the effective implementation of the plan**

- Regularly inform the media and public about the implementation process
- Engage in advocacy with key stakeholders including national parliaments, national human rights institutions, diplomatic representatives in your country, etc.

Post-membership phase

In the post-membership phase, human rights defenders and their organizations should investigate the impact of the voluntary pledges on protection of human rights during the HRC membership period. Through the analysis, human rights defenders and their CSOs should gain insights in shortcomings and inform their future advocacy activities.

CSOs should insist the government to conduct an overall evaluation of the HRC membership which should, inter alia, examine both the impact of the proposed measures on implementing voluntary pledges and obligations, and to assess the quality of the cooperation between state and civil society organisations during the HRC membership period. Civil society organisations should also evaluate their work and impact and come out with recommendations on how to improve similar activities in the future.

➤ #1: Encourage and be an active participant in government-led evaluation

- Encourage the government to evaluate the whole HRC membership period and to come with recommendations on how to utilize future memberships in HRC and similar multilateral bodies for the improvement of the domestic human rights record, including on how to improve cooperation with civil society organisations in that regard.
- Actively participate in the evaluation process and use it to present ideas on how to improve it in the future.

➤ #2: Provide self-evaluation CSO engagement in HRC membership

- Conduct evaluation of the civil society efforts and activities regarding the HRC membership; involve a variety of different human rights defenders and their organisations working across different rights and with different groups, including academia and other relevant stakeholders whose input could be valuable.

Provide evaluation of CSO engagement in HRC membership

- *Conduct the stakeholders analysis and identify all relevant CSOs that have engaged in any way with your country's membership in HRC*
- *Develop the assessment tools that can provide you with the accurate data on CSOs involvement*
- *Reach out to stakeholders and collect data*
- *Analyze the data and assess the engagement of civil society*
- *Make sure to present your assessment results and develop recommendations on improving the CSO engagement*

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLBOX

Assess the political context

The use of the specific tools will depend on the context you are working in. It may not be the same if you are using specific tools in a more open or closed political system. You are in the best position to assess and evaluate your context. These tools were developed by the organizations working in the relatively open or more open democratic contexts where the majority of the tools can be used successfully. On the other hand, in a more closed contexts where the cooperation with the government is not possible or non existing, and where the civil society does not have the ability to cooperate with the government, the tools that focus on the self-organization of the civil society could be more appropriate, as well as reaching out to international NGOs.

Build your strategy

Define what you want to achieve by working on your country's HRC membership. The strategy may differ across contexts. In a relatively open democratic contexts you may wish to focus on engaging in dialogue with the

government to set the priorities, develop the plan or evaluate the success of your country's membership, while in a more closed democratic environment it would be beneficial to focus on raising awareness of the need for more participative democracy and the role of Human Rights Council in tackling domestic human rights issues. In any case, the choice of the tools and their modification will depend on what you want to achieve.

Select the tools and assess their impact and resources needed

When you have set the objectives of your work, select the tools you find the most appropriate to achieve them. They can be modified according to your needs. The list of tools is not exhaustive, rather indicative, and you should not limit yourself only to them nor to sustain from expanding them. The context will be a definitive aspect not only of your choice of the tools, but also of their impact. Some tools may be more impactful than others. For example, encouraging broad discussion and public consultation may have more impact in

context that have longer traditions of participative democracy. The impact will also depend on the resources you have on your disposal. Broad public discussion based on organizing local-level deliberation and consultation events in more populated countries inevitably require more resources than in less populated ones. Resources needed for your strategy implementation can be financial, logistical, human etc. Make sure to plan them according to your goals and take them into account when planning your goals.



