

# **Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the work of the Human Rights Council**

**Practical Guide**

[www.ohchr.org/sidsldc](http://www.ohchr.org/sidsldc)



**UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

## BACKGROUND

In accordance with its resolution 19/26 of 23 March 2012, the Human Rights Council (HRC) established the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the work of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

The main objective of the Trust Fund is to support activities designed to enhance the institutional and human capacity of least developed countries and small island developing States, including by enabling their delegations (in particular those that do not have a permanent mission in Geneva) to participate more fully in the work of the Human Rights Council, upon their request, and encouraging their effective and informed participation in consultative and decision-making processes, such as negotiation sessions.

The Fund, which is managed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), provides funding for the following activities:

- (a) Targeted training courses and capacity-building activities, including e-learning, on the international human rights system, international human rights law and the rules and functioning of the HRC and its mechanisms;
- (b) Travel and accommodation for government officials to participate in HRC sessions;
- (c) Fellowship programme for government officials to undertake a work placement of up to 3 months (not exceeding 90 days) relating to the work of the HRC;
- (d) Induction training sessions for government officials of LDCs/SIDS to provide them with information on the multilateral human rights system as well as focused, practical training related to the work procedures of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.

## **PROGRAMME I**

### **PARTICIPATION IN A REGULAR SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system that is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations, including by adopting relevant recommendations. The Council also discusses a wide range of thematic human rights issues and country-specific issues that require its attention throughout the year.

The Human Rights Council holds three regular sessions each year: in March, June and September. It can also decide to hold a special session to address human rights violations and emergencies whenever necessary. The Council meets in Room XX of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Sessions.aspx>

#### **WHO CAN APPLY?**

As a rule, only a government official/civil servant from a LDC/SIDS who is based in their home country is eligible to apply.

A representative of a LDC/SIDS can apply to participate in any of the three regular Human Rights Council sessions.

#### **DURATION**

Programme I covers the participation of a government official during a regular session of the Human Rights Council:

- March: up to 4 weeks
- June/September: up to 3 weeks

#### **SCOPE OF THE FINANCIAL COVERAGE**

Based on applicable UN rules on travel, the Trust Fund covers the following:

- One round-trip ticket in economy class per regular session per Member State; and

- Daily subsistence allowance for the duration of the mission in Geneva (not exceeding the duration of the regular session).
- The Trust Fund does not cover costs for health insurance or other expenses, including personal expenses, during the government official's stay in Geneva.

### HOW TO APPLY?

Government representatives from interested LDCs/SIDS should submit their applications through their permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva (when applicable), along with the following documents:

- An official letter or Note Verbale endorsing the designation of a government official;
- A scanned copy of the passport of the designated government official. The passport must be valid for at least four months after their return to their home country; and
- Curriculum vitae in English or French

**Important notice:** Only fully completed applications that are submitted prior to the deadline will be considered. Applications should be sent to: [sidslcd@ohchr.org](mailto:sidslcd@ohchr.org) and [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org)

### DEADLINE

Interested representatives from LDCs/SIDS should submit their request to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with the following deadlines:

| Regular session of the HRC | Deadline for submission |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| March                      | 1 January               |
| June                       | 1 April                 |
| September                  | 1 July                  |

For updates, including on the dates of upcoming Human Rights Council sessions, please refer to the following link:

[www.ohchr.org/sidslcd](http://www.ohchr.org/sidslcd)

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Any additional questions pertaining to Programme I can be sent to: [sidslcd@ohchr.org](mailto:sidslcd@ohchr.org)

## **PROGRAMME II FELLOWSHIP**

### **WHAT WILL THE FELLOW TAKE BACK HOME?**

It is envisaged that the Fellow will continue working with her/his government after the Fellowship at OHCHR. This will enable the Fellow to contribute to the strengthening of their national capacity to participate more effectively in the work of the Human Rights Council, including by facilitating the effective and informed participation of representatives in consultative and decision-making processes such as negotiations.

### **HOW DOES THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME WORK?**

The aim of the Fellowship Programme is to give representatives of governments from LDCs/SIDS a better understanding and appreciation of the Human Rights Council. Through this experience, the Fellow will gain knowledge and practical working experience with the Council, its mechanisms and subsidiary bodies. In addition to enhancing the participation of the Fellow in the work of the Council, the Fellowship will enable each Fellow network with other Geneva-based delegations, OHCHR, and other UN departments and agencies, as well as NGOs represented in Geneva.

The Fellow will be based in Geneva and will work under the guidance of the Human Rights Council Branch of OHCHR for a period of up to 3 months (not exceeding 90 days). The Fellow will engage with other delegations, the Human Rights Council Secretariat, other OHCHR staff, UN departments and agencies, as well as NGOs.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME**

It is envisaged that the Fellow will:

- Attend the OHCHR/UNITAR human rights orientation programme;
- Attend a regular session of the Human Rights Council;
- Attend a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group session;

- Substantively engage with OHCHR on questions relating to the Human Rights Council, special procedures, the UPR and other mechanisms and subsidiary bodies;
- Attend other relevant meetings of the human rights mechanisms taking place during the period; and
- Carry out a project that will facilitate ensure the future participation/ involvement of her/his country in the work of the HRC. A project proposal should be submitted at the end of the Fellowship before returning to her/his country (ten page maximum).

### TIMELINE

The Fellowship programme runs only once a year. It starts at the end of August/beginning of September and ends in November.

The dates of the Fellowship Programme were selected to enable the Fellow to attend a September session of the Human Rights Council, a session of the UPR Working Group and relevant meetings of other human rights mechanisms.

### WHO CAN APPLY?

As a rule, only a government official/civil servant from a LDC/SIDS who is based in her/his home country is eligible to apply.

At the time of application, the candidate must have:

- An advanced university degree in law, political science, international relations or a related discipline. Significant relevant experience may be considered in lieu of an advanced university degree.
- A minimum of 3 years' experience in the government of her/his home country with relevant experience in the field of human rights. Experience in intergovernmental affairs is an asset.
- Fluency in English and/or French. Knowledge of other UN languages is considered an asset.

Each interested candidate must submit a supporting letter from a government official authorizing her/his participation in the Fellowship Programme. The candidate must also be committed to sharing the knowledge and experience gained during the Fellowship with their colleagues.

## HOW IS THE SELECTION MADE?

The following criteria will be taken into consideration during the selection process:

- Current functions performed by the Fellow in the capital;
- Fellowships/requests for participation previously granted to the Fellow's country;
- Applications submitted by LDCs/SIDS that have not received previous assistance from the Trust Fund will be given priority;
- Gender balance; and
- Motivation for applying to the Trust Fund and expressed level of commitment, including the outline of a concrete plan for post-participation follow-up action.

A pre-selection is made following a careful desk review of all received applications.

Applicants are informed of the final decision by mid-July.

## SCOPE OF THE FINANCIAL COVERAGE

The Trust Fund financially supports the selected Fellow in the form of a monthly stipend for the duration of the Fellowship Programme (three months) and covers the cost of a round-trip ticket in economy class (based on applicable UN rules on travel).

The Trust Fund does not cover costs for health insurance or other expenses, including personal expenses, during the Fellow's stay in Geneva. She/he is also responsible for arranging her/his own temporary accommodation.

## HOW TO APPLY?

Interested and qualified candidates must submit applications through their permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva (when applicable), together with the following documents:

- Completed application form (available on our website);
- Detailed curriculum vitae in English or French;
- Personal letter of motivation explaining concrete follow-up actions that will be undertaken upon return to the capital (two pages maximum);
- Signed letter of support from the permanent mission to the United Nations Office in Geneva (or from the capital in the absence of a permanent mission in Geneva);
- An official letter or Note Verbale endorsing the designation of a government official; and
- A scanned copy of the passport of the designated government official. The passport must be valid for at least four months after their return to their home country.

**Important notice:** Only fully completed applications that are submitted prior to the deadline will be considered. Applications should be sent to: [sidslc@ohchr.org](mailto:sidslc@ohchr.org) and [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org)

**Deadline: 1 June of each year.**

For updates, including on the dates of upcoming Human Rights Council sessions, please refer to the following link:

[www.ohchr.org/sidslc](http://www.ohchr.org/sidslc)

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Any additional questions pertaining to the Programme II can be sent to: [sidslc@ohchr.org](mailto:sidslc@ohchr.org)



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***Are the two Programmes of the Trust Fund only open to LDCs/SIDS Member States which are also members of the Human Rights Council?***

No. The LDCs/SIDS Fellowship Programmes are open to all LDCs/SIDS, regardless of their membership on the Human Rights Council.

### ***Is it possible for a representative of a LDC/SIDS to apply for both Programmes of the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund?***

Yes. An eligible representative from a LDC/SIDS may apply for both programmes, however, no State will be eligible to benefit from both programmes unless that State is a current member of the Human Rights Council.

### ***Who may apply to the two Programmes?***

Only government officials/civil servants from a LDC/SIDS are eligible to apply for the Trust Fund Programmes.

### ***Is it possible for a LDC/SIDS to request financial support for the participation of a government official from the capital (the same government official and/or a different government official) for all three of the regular sessions of the HRC during the same calendar year?***

No. The Trust Fund only covers in principle, the participation of one government official from a selected LDC/SIDS for one regular session of the HRC during a calendar year.

### ***Who can benefit from the Fellowship Programme?***

The LDC/SIDS Fellowship Programme is only available to government officials/civil servants working in the field of human rights and justice. The Fellow should continue to work in the field of human rights upon return to her/his country. Applications from women are encouraged.

### ***Are the two programmes open to members of National Human Rights Institutions, representatives of regional and cross-regional organizations, civil society representatives, journalists and interns?***

No. The LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund only provides support to government officials/civil servants of LDCs/SIDS.

### *Is it possible for a LDC/SIDS to benefit from both of the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund and the UPR Trust Fund on Participation?*

Yes, in principle, but only in accordance with the specific conditions indicated below.

**The LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund** supports the participation of LDCs/SIDS in the work of the Human Rights Council through:

- Its three regular sessions (Programme I); and
- The Fellowship Programme (Programme II).

**The UPR Trust Fund on Participation** provides, inter alia, support to developing countries, specifically LDCs, to participate in the Universal Periodic Review. The Trust Fund covers the participation of one government official during the review of the government official's country in the UPR Working Group and during the adoption of the outcome of the UPR in the Human Rights Council plenary session.

If the UPR of a LDC/SIDS is taking place during a calendar year, **the application for the Fellowship Programme** will only be, in principle, considered for eligibility under the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund.

All requests from a LDC/SIDS related to financial support for its participation in the UPR (briefing, review and adoption of outcomes) should be directed to the UPR Trust Fund on Participation.

### *What are the criteria for selecting the Fellows?*

The following criteria will be taken into consideration during the selection process:

- Current functions performed by the Fellow in the capital;
- Fellowships/requests for participation previously granted to the Fellow's country;
- Applications submitted by LDCs/SIDS that have not received previous assistance from the Trust Fund will be given priority;
- Gender balance; and
- Motivation for applying to the Trust Fund and expressed level of commitment, including the outline of a concrete plan for post-participation follow-up action

### ***How many Fellowships are granted each year?***

Ideally, the Trust Fund will support up to six Fellowships per year, however, the actual number will depend on the availability of funds.

### ***Is the Trust Fund able to respond positively to all requests for participation in regular HRC sessions?***

As the Trust Fund is only funded through voluntary contributions, there is no guarantee that all requests will receive a positive response. Please note that priority will be granted to requests for participation in the March session, which includes the High-Level Segment.

### ***How is the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund funded?***

The LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund is funded by voluntary contributions from Member States.

For additional information, please consult the following link.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/FundingBudget.aspx>

## **ACRONYMS**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>HRC</b>    | Human Rights Council                               |
| <b>LDCs</b>   | Least Developed Countries                          |
| <b>OHCHR</b>  | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights   |
| <b>SIDS</b>   | Small Island Developing States                     |
| <b>UPR</b>    | Universal Periodic Review                          |
| <b>UNITAR</b> | United Nations Institute for Training and Research |





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