

# Human Rights Consortium Scotland

## **UPDATE: Engaging with the process of the UN's Universal Periodic Review**

### **Background**

Between 29 March and 4 April 2012, a series of pre-session meetings were set up in Geneva for State delegations and civil society organizations to discuss the human rights situation of the States under review by the UN at the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the UPR. The Human Rights Consortium Scotland attended the session on the United Kingdom on 2 April.

The meeting was attended by a small group of NGOs including the Committee on the Administration of Justice, British Irish Rights Watch and Human Rights Consortium (all Northern Ireland); Anti-Slavery International England, Open Society, World Vision, SCOPE and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (all England-based groups); Engender, the Scottish Campaign for a Fairer Society and Human Rights Consortium Scotland (the Scottish attendees). The EHRC also sent a representative. 27 Permanent Missions including the United Kingdom were present at the meeting,

### **HRCS and the UPR**

The Human Rights Consortium Scotland (HRCS) delegated Vice-Chair Pat Elsmie to present a statement at the pre-session. This gave updated views based on the full Submission paper made to the UPR in November 2011. Both papers are electronically available from the HRCS secretariat liaison [shirleybradley@gdaonline.co.uk](mailto:shirleybradley@gdaonline.co.uk)

In the statement, the points we raised complemented those from colleagues representing the other NGOs and interests across the UK. We focused on process issues in the Questions that we suggested should be put to Scotland and the United Kingdom. These were:

1. What leadership has the Scottish Government taken to ensure the Human Rights Act reaches its full potential?
2. What steps has the Scottish Government taken to ensure that public bodies promote human rights as well as do the minimum necessary to comply with the legislation?
3. How has the Scottish Government promoted human rights to the general public (and addressed misunderstandings)?

4. How has the Scottish Government ensured human rights promotion and compliance within those bodies which it funds e.g through the regulator Audit Scotland of the 32 local authorities, 14 geographical health boards and 8 'Special Health Boards'? We know this is possible as one of the Special Boards, the State Hospital Board Carstairs, has implemented a human rights action plan.
5. Will the Scottish Government issue guidance on the status of UN Treaties in Scotland, given the Scotland Act 1998?
6. What specific steps have already been taken to give effect to the UPR recommendation from Egypt on socio economic duties? Also, to give effect to the UN's 'Business and Human Rights' Agenda in respect of companies that employ people to work in Scotland?

### **So far**

The HRCS is strengthening its links with the national and international network of NGOs working to support human rights, with UK/Scotland national human rights institutions as well as the respective UN channels. While we only receive limited and voluntary contributions from members, the Consortium has been fortunate to stretch that to take part in its first event outwith Scotland. It has proved a worthwhile experience for our network of NGOs. We intend to continue our interaction with the Permanent Missions in this UPR process and to build our capacity to participate in further stages of the Review of the UK.

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