

HRC is composed of 18 independent experts and meets three times a year (in New York in March, and in Geneva in July and November). The Committee has two pre-session working groups which meet prior to each session. The first is entrusted with the task of making recommendations regarding communications received under the Optional Protocol; the second is mandated to prepare concise lists of issues concerning the state reports to be examined by the Committee at the upcoming session.

States parties must submit reports to the Committee every five years on the measures they have adopted to give effect to the rights set out in the Covenant and on the progress made in the enjoyment of those rights.

The reports are examined by the Committee in public meetings and, on the final day of the session, the Committee adopts concluding observations and comments summarizing its main concerns and making appropriate suggestions and recommendations to the government concerned. The Committee encourages non-governmental organizations to submit written information and reports for its consideration when examining state reports.

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA): These were the documents adopted by consensus at the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, June 1993.