

c. Political and Democratic Rights and Freedoms (UDHR Art. 18, 19, 20 and 21)

Officers are first asked to briefly describe the ability of individuals and groups to exercise the following rights and freedoms:

- **freedom of opinion,**
- **freedom of religion** (could include the treatment of foreign clergy, the freedom to publish religious documents in foreign languages),
- **freedom of expression** (could include academic freedom),
- **freedom of association,**
- **the right to peaceful assembly** (Are permits needed? Is excessive force deliberately used to repress demonstrations and political rallies?),
- **freedom of political choice** (evaluate the extent to which citizens can change the laws and individuals that govern them through periodic, genuine, free and fair referenda and elections).

Officers should then evaluate the extent of civil society in the country under review (the functioning of NGOs in a given country is an excellent indicator of the extent of democratic development in a given society). Outlined below are a series of questions which may assist in this evaluation:

- Can groups, communities, civil associations, professional and interest organizations negotiate with institutions and bureaucracies to influence public policy and provide checks on the powers of government?
- Are human rights NGOs silenced? Do they function freely or are they subject to reprisals? Can they associate with foreign NGOs? Does the government cooperate with international human rights NGOs?
- Is there an independent media capable of giving voice to popular concerns and influencing public policy? Is there censorship of the press? Are there any restrictions on the activities of journalists? Are journalists subjected to harassment, death threats, reprisals, libel or criminal suits by the authorities? Are foreign publications allowed in the country?

2. Economic, social and cultural rights (UDHR Art. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27)

Economic, social and cultural rights are defined in terms of an individual's entitlement to the "realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his [sic] dignity and the free development of the personality". The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights specifies the obligation of States parties "to take steps, individually and through international assistance and cooperation, ... to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of these rights". Assessments in this sub-section of the report thus address a central element of the concept of "good governance".