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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Universal periodic review

Operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review

**Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights**



I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council decision 17/119, in which the Council requested the Secretariat to provide an annual written update on the operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the universal periodic review and on the resources available to it. The report was prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Board of Trustees of the Fund. The report provides an overview of contributions and expenditure as at 31 December 2018 (see table 1), together with a description of action taken since the submission of the previous report (A/HRC/38/27) to operationalize the Fund. It also provides a description of the results achieved through the various activities financed by the Fund during 2018.

B. Background

2. In its resolution 6/17, the Human Rights Council requested the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for financial and technical assistance in order to provide, in conjunction with multilateral funding mechanisms, a source of financial and technical assistance to help countries implement recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review in consultation with, and with the consent of, the country concerned. In its resolution 16/21, the Council requested that the Voluntary Fund be strengthened and operationalized in order to provide a source of financial and technical assistance to help countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, to implement the recommendations emanating from their respective reviews. The Council also requested that a board of trustees be established in accordance with the rules of the United Nations.

3. The Voluntary Fund was established in 2009. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides financial and technical assistance to States that have requested or consented to receiving such support, in the spirit of the founding resolution of the universal periodic review, in which it is stated that the objectives of the review include the improvement of the human rights situation on the ground (Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, annex, para. 4 (a)), the fulfilment of the State's human rights obligations and commitments (*ibid.*, para. 4 (b)) and the enhancement of the State's capacity and of technical assistance, in consultation with, and with the consent of, the State concerned (*ibid.*, para. 4 (c)).

II. Operationalization of the Voluntary Fund

A. Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund

4. The members of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights also serve as the Board of Trustees for the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance. They are tasked with overseeing the management of the latter Fund. In 2018, the composition of the Board was as follows: Marieclaire Acosta Urquidi (Mexico) (until end June); Morten Kjaerum (Denmark); Lin Lim (Malaysia); Valeriya Lutkovska (Ukraine); Esi Sutherland-Addy (Ghana); and Carmen Rosa Villa (Peru) (from July). Ms. Acosta Urquidi served as member of the Board and Chair until 30 June 2018. Ms. Villa succeeded Ms. Acosta Urquidi, following her appointment as a member of the Board by the United Nations Secretary-General in July 2018. The Board elected Mr. Kjaerum as Chair.

5. In close consultation with the various sections of OHCHR, the Board of Trustees focuses its attention on broadly guiding the operationalization of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance by providing policy advice.

6. In April 2018, the Board of Trustees visited the OHCHR Country Office in Colombia. The visit allowed the Board to observe the type of technical cooperation that an OHCHR country presence could offer based upon the results of its monitoring role. The Board paid attention to the way in which OHCHR facilitated the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders with different human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, and how it supported the follow-up to the recommendations of those mechanisms.

7. In November 2018, the Board of Trustees visited the OHCHR Regional Office for South America in Santiago, where it held its tenth session. The visit provided an opportunity for the Board to observe in situ the development and implementation of programmes by an OHCHR regional presence. The Board learned how partners greatly relied on the Regional Office's expertise and advice, for example when strengthening national protection systems. Particularly innovative was the way in which the Regional Office had enhanced engagement with countries in the region through the complementary use of the two Voluntary Funds that the Board oversaw and the treaty body capacity-building programme. The Board learned about the activities of the Regional Office in support of States to promote the establishment of permanent national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up, to develop databases for following up on recommendations and to prepare reports to the human rights treaty bodies and the universal periodic review. The Board also learned of activities to promote the inclusion of a human rights-based approach in United Nations country team planning documents, and to link strategic outcomes of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks with relevant Sustainable Development Goals and recommendations emanating from the international human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review. The Board also started to discuss ways to enhance technical cooperation around the frontier issues identified in the OHCHR Management Plan for 2018–2021, including regarding the impact of corruption and its dimensions on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. During discussions with State actors and United Nations partners in the region, the Board had the opportunity to analyse how the human rights dimensions of corruption were highlighted in the universal periodic review process, and the areas in which technical cooperation could support States in implementing relevant accepted recommendations to address those challenges.

B. Strategic use of the Fund

8. Since its establishment, the universal periodic review mechanism has completed two cycles, in which every State Member of the United Nations has undergone reviews. The third cycle began in May 2017. Member States have shown growing interest in the review process. As a result, the average number of recommendations of the reviews in the third cycle has increased. From the second cycle onwards, a particular focus of the reviews has been the implementation of the accepted recommendations, as stipulated by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 16/21.

9. Taken together with the recommendations of treaty bodies and special procedure mandate holders, recommendations from universal periodic reviews highlight a cross section of the critical human rights gaps at the country level. They point to the areas that need strengthening in order to bolster national human rights institutions and national capacities, foster resilience and create an environment conducive to addressing the root causes of human rights violations and, as such, have a preventive effect.

10. OHCHR has been supporting States in implementing universal periodic review recommendations, in particular through the use of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance at the request or with the consent of the State.

11. OHCHR has been making every effort to make its follow-up support more proactive, systematic and results-oriented. To that end, it has been engaging with States in their efforts to implement universal periodic review recommendations by providing support directly through its field presences or by ensuring the integration of support in United Nations country team programming on follow-up.

12. Proposals by field presences for Voluntary Fund resources have to be backed by proof of State requests or consent. Not only is this the minimum requirement, this principle also enhances national ownership. National ownership reflects the spirit of the review (in which the primary responsibility to implement the universal periodic review recommendations rests with the State) and the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and is an essential factor for success of any cooperation. Accordingly, Governments should be the initiators or co-initiators of requests for Voluntary Fund resources, with OHCHR being a source of expertise and support.

13. In order to increase objectivity in considering suggested projects for Voluntary Fund support, OHCHR has based its funding decisions on five criteria, which are also based on the terms of reference of the Voluntary Fund. The underlying principles are the devotion of resources to support the most pressing thematic human rights issues in the State and the building of national capacities for implementation that are efficient and sustainable, in line with the vision outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights through the promotion of international cooperation and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity (A/72/351). The list is not restrictive, however, and proposals for other types of projects focusing on universal periodic review implementation, based on consultations with, or the consent of, the country concerned have also been encouraged.

Promotion and implementation of key universal periodic review recommendations

14. Recommendations resulting from the universal periodic review process have grown in number from a few dozen for the first countries undergoing reviews to some two hundred recommendations per country on average in the third cycle. This evidently poses serious challenges to the State in terms of implementation, taking into account the accumulation of universal periodic review recommendations over time and in light of other implementation requirements, such as those relating to recommendations from treaty bodies, special procedures and regional human rights mechanisms.

15. The support from the Voluntary Fund that is available for implementation efforts will therefore need to be focused on key universal periodic review recommendations, so that such support can make a significant and lasting contribution to national change. In order to determine whether Voluntary Fund resources should be spent on a proposal for the implementation of specific universal periodic review recommendations, the following questions are relevant:

- (a) Do the recommendations targeted in the proposal reflect significant human rights gaps at the country level?
- (b) Have the treaty bodies and special procedure mandate holders flagged the thematic issue in question?
- (c) Do the recommendations targeted in the proposal correspond to the areas flagged by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the letter sent following the review?
- (d) Will implementation of the proposal contribute to strengthening the national human rights protection system and changes in laws and in practice?
- (e) Will implementation of the proposal contribute to the better alignment of human rights and development efforts with the Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators?

Strengthening the capacity of United Nations country teams

16. In addition to direct support for implementation of the recommendations stemming from universal periodic reviews by OHCHR field presences, another modality is the integration of support in United Nations country team programming on follow-up, in response to a government request for such assistance. Through the leadership of the United Nations resident coordinators, accepted universal periodic review recommendations could be increasingly reflected in common country assessments or United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and in the planning and programming documents of individual

United Nations agencies and programmes, especially accepted recommendations that fall fully within their mandate. Such a practice would assist States in achieving concrete progress in universal periodic review implementation, as well as in delivering on human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Establishment or strengthening of national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up

17. States have increasingly adopted comprehensive, more efficient and sustainable approaches to reporting, engagement and follow-up to recommendations through the establishment of a new type of governmental structure known as a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up. This is a permanent national governmental mechanism or structure mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to, and engage with, international and regional human rights mechanisms and to coordinate and track national follow-up to and implementation of recommendations. Such national mechanisms work in coordination with ministries and specialized State bodies, such as the national statistics office, the parliament and the judiciary, and in consultation with the national human rights institution(s) and civil society. Funding of projects for the establishment or strengthening of a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up by the Voluntary Fund will therefore serve to create sustainable capacity for reporting on and implementation of universal periodic review recommendations.

Creation of a recommendations implementation plan

18. Many States develop a recommendations implementation plan, sometimes supported by database software hosted at a ministry that administers the software. Such plans, and any databases to support them, ideally cluster all recommendations from the international human rights mechanisms thematically, prioritize them and indicate implementation responsibilities, a time frame for implementation, as well as resources and indicators. The national recommendations tracking database currently under development by OHCHR will greatly assist in this task. Clustered recommendations can easily be cross linked to the Sustainable Development Goals to build synergies and linkages between the different follow-up and reporting activities related to the Goals and human rights. They can also serve as useful tools for United Nations country teams, where applicable, to inform their common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and interactions with government counterparts.

Strengthening parliamentary capacities for implementation

19. In its resolution 35/29, the Human Rights Council acknowledged the crucial role that parliaments play in translating international commitments into national policies and laws. This includes supporting the implementation of recommendations generated by the international human rights mechanisms, especially those from the universal periodic review that are accepted by the State. It may be noted that within the context of the universal periodic review a majority of recommendations require or involve parliamentary action.

20. In resolution 35/29, the Council also requested OHCHR to prepare a study on how to promote and enhance synergies between parliaments and the work of the Council and its universal periodic review. The resulting report (A/HRC/38/25) was based on responses to a questionnaire sent to parliaments, Member States and national human rights institutions. In the report, OHCHR stressed the importance of parliamentary human rights committees and their critical role in all phases of the universal periodic review, especially in follow-up to recommendations. Annexed to the report is a set of draft principles on parliaments and human rights, which aim to guide parliaments in setting up parliamentary human rights committees and to ensure their effective functioning.

21. The enhanced focus on parliaments as a key enabling actor in national human rights protection systems will allow OHCHR to deliver results across all six pillars of its work, as set out in its Management Plan. A strengthened role of parliaments on human rights (through their oversight, legislative and budgetary functions) will increase implementation of the recommendations of human rights mechanisms; better link human rights to national development efforts (and budgets); help prevent violations; enhance equality and counter discrimination (in particular through legislative efforts); strengthen accountability (through

their oversight role); and enhance participation (as elective bodies to which civil society and national human rights institutions have access).

22. OHCHR is actively promoting the role of parliaments and parliamentary human rights committees in the universal periodic review process, including through subregional workshops to share good practices in the preparation of the reviews, and in the implementation of and follow-up to the universal periodic review recommendations. In these workshops, OHCHR has pledged to continue to support parliaments in their engagement in the review process, in close cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Partnerships have also been developed to this end with the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

III. Results achieved through the implementation of activities supported by the Voluntary Fund during 2018

23. The activities financed through the Voluntary Fund in 2018 can be divided into three categories: (a) activities of OHCHR field presences; (b) direct support to Governments; and (c) a regional workshop on universal periodic review preparation and implementation of recommendations. Support to OHCHR field presences was provided for activities in Argentina, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Fiji, Jamaica, the Niger and Uruguay. Based on a request from the Government of Mongolia (where OHCHR does not have a field presence), a comprehensive one-and-a-half-year project was developed, focusing on different elements, including a national preventive mechanism; business and human rights; the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons; a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up; and an e-learning platform in the National Human Rights Commission.

24. With the assistance of the Voluntary Fund, the OHCHR country office in Cambodia helped implement recommendations from the first two cycles of the universal periodic review with regard to the justice system and land rights, and supported enhanced stakeholders' consultations on the implementation and monitoring of international human rights recommendations. In the justice sector, the country office contributed to the professionalization of the criminal justice system by enhancing the capacity of judges to apply international human rights law in the area of pretrial detention. In the land sector, the office worked to enhance the capacity of local authorities to implement the land titling process for indigenous peoples' communities.

25. As part of its broader work to help consolidate the rule of law and increase accountability, OHCHR is working with the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Council of Magistracy to reduce both the number of people held in pretrial detention and the duration of detentions. With the support of the Voluntary Fund, the country office in Cambodia trained 90 judges and clerks on pretrial detention and legal reasoning. The training provided a unique opportunity to highlight the importance of human rights standards-compliant legal reasoning when ordering pretrial detention. Participating judges and judicial clerks also learned how to better use a pretrial detention form previously developed by the Ministry of Justice with support from OHCHR.

26. For several years, human rights mechanisms have expressed concern about the lack of tenure security for indigenous communities in Cambodia, in particular the complex and costly communal land titling process. With the support of the Voluntary Fund, the OHCHR country office produced a government-sanctioned manual on the communal land titling process, developed in collaboration with the relevant line ministries and indigenous organizations, aimed at assisting local authorities and indigenous communities in carrying out the titling process.

27. In a context of limited space for civil society to meaningfully participate in public discussions, the OHCHR country office organized workshops that raised awareness among Cambodian civil society organizations of the importance of the universal periodic review process and their formal role therein, and supported interactions with the main

governmental mechanism on human rights with a view to encouraging a participatory approach to follow-up to universal periodic review recommendations.

28. The workshops provided space for dialogue among all the stakeholders, including development partners and the United Nations country team, involved in the implementation and monitoring of recommendations from international human rights mechanisms. As a result, civil society organizations are better able to continue advocating for and engaging with the Cambodian Human Rights Committee on the elaboration of a plan of action for the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations.

29. In Jamaica, financing from the Voluntary Fund was used to develop an online training platform for the judiciary, following a request by the Chief Justice. In 2018, the online training for the judiciary was fully drafted and designed and its contents were uploaded to a provisional web page. The platform contains four modules: international human rights law; the human rights of persons deprived of their liberty; the right to a fair trial; and the rights of persons living with HIV and of persons with disabilities. The project also included a consultation workshop to introduce regional and national references and jurisprudence. The online training course has been published on the website of the Judicial Education Institute in Jamaica (www.demoprojectsvml.com/IHR/).

30. On 13 December 2018, a workshop for parliamentarians was organized by the OHCHR presence in the Niger to raise awareness among parliamentarians of their roles and responsibilities regarding implementation of universal periodic review recommendations. Parliamentarians, including members of the network on human rights, were briefed on the National Implementation Action Plan adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2017, which set as priorities the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations, the submission of the universal periodic review mid-term report in 2019 and the submission of periodic reports to treaty bodies.

31. The role of parliamentarians in the implementation of accepted recommendations is crucial, as many of these recommendations necessitate the adoption of laws and policies and the ratification of United Nations human rights treaties. As a result of the workshop, parliamentarians better understand the universal periodic review mechanism and the human rights commitments of the Niger, and will be able to take the initiative on the effective implementation of universal periodic review recommendations.

32. The OHCHR Regional Office for the Pacific used the Voluntary Fund to recruit a national United Nations Volunteer to support the ongoing work of the Regional Office related to the universal periodic review, including the assessment of universal periodic review recommendations. The Volunteer started work at the end of November 2018, providing technical support to the United Nations country team in Fiji for its universal periodic review submission and to the Citizen's Constitutional Forum, the lead civil society organization for the preparation of the civil society submission on Fiji. The United Nations Volunteer will also engage in the development, coordination and delivery of awareness-raising and training activities for national and regional stakeholders on, inter alia, the role of international human rights mechanisms, the establishment of national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up, universal periodic review reporting and the development of plans of action and indicators for the implementation of recommendations. It is also planned to organize mock sessions of the universal periodic review.

33. The OHCHR Regional Office for South America assisted Argentina in the establishment of a system for follow-up and implementation of recommendations – the Monitoring System on International Recommendations database known as SIMORE – through the facilitation of the transfer of the software and methodology by Paraguay to Argentina. An initial round of workshops were carried out in 2018 for the training of focal points, with the aim to integrate the database methodology and software. Results to date include the strengthening of capacity to organize recommendations into thematic groups and databases and to indicate their link to the Sustainable Development Goals, the identification of focal points, and the acquisition of the methodology shared by Paraguay. Workshops will continue in 2019.

34. The Regional Office for South America also supported activities in Uruguay through the use of the Voluntary Fund. The Fund's support was crucial for the work on "Structural

transformations needed for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda”, a project led by the Office of the Resident Coordinator and UNDP. The project is a joint effort of United Nations agencies, the Government, academia, civil society and the private sector and is aimed at strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a high-income country by addressing bottlenecks hindering the transition to sustainable development.

35. The Voluntary Fund was also used to hire a consultant to integrate human rights and a gender dimension into the project in Uruguay, providing inputs interlinking the 2030 Agenda with the main human rights tools, including the recommendations emanating from the international human rights system, such as the universal periodic review. A series of consultations and dialogues with civil society organizations and other stakeholders are also planned.

36. The OHCHR Regional Office for Central America, through a joint project implemented with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and with the support of the Voluntary Fund, assisted Costa Rica in the establishment of a national database to be used by the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Monitoring and Implementation of International Human Rights Obligations for the tasks of reporting to international human rights mechanisms and following up on their recommendations, including those emanating from the universal periodic review. The database, modelled on the database developed by Paraguay, will also facilitate the preparation of follow-up plans.

37. In 2018, the Regional Office for Central America procured the required software to install the recommendations monitoring database, and supported the coordination between the ministries of foreign affairs of Costa Rica and Paraguay, facilitating technical assistance by Paraguay in order to build the capacity of members of the Inter-Institutional Commission. However, the presidential elections held in April 2018 and the subsequent change of Government in May of that year delayed the execution of the planned activities related to the database.

38. In 2018, the Regional Office for Central America also continued to provide technical assistance to the Inter-Institutional Commission in the integration of human rights indicators into public policy planning and monitoring, including through the organization of a three-day follow-up workshop.

39. In addition, the Regional Office supported the Inter-Institutional Commission in its coordination with civil society organizations, through the permanent body of consultation and participation. It also supported the Inter-Institutional Commission and the permanent body of consultation and participation in the definition of their methods of work and their programme of work for 2019.

40. In response to a request from the Government of Mongolia for assistance from the Voluntary Fund, OHCHR provided technical assistance to support the implementation of the Government’s Universal Periodic Review Action Plan 2016–2019, which contains the 150 recommendations from the second cycle of the universal periodic review that the Government accepted, grouped in 12 clusters, including actions against torture, to strengthen the national human rights institution and to counter discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. The project, which runs from July 2018 until the end of 2019, includes plans for the establishment of a national preventive mechanism in line with the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the establishment of a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up and a national recommendations tracking database; the adoption of a national strategy to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework; the submission to the parliament of a draft law on human rights defenders; and the launching of the Free and Equal Campaign at the national level.

41. On 17 and 18 October 2018, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, OHCHR organized a national consultation on a national preventive mechanism, in which approximately 50 representatives from the parliament, ministries, the police academy, prisons, non-governmental organizations and academics participated. The objective of the consultation was to issue concrete recommendations by participants to identify the most suitable model for the establishment of a national preventive mechanism

by early 2019. Participants recommended that such a mechanism be established within the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia as soon as possible, in keeping with the requirements of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, including ensuring the independence of the mechanism and the immunity of its members, sufficient financial resources and capacity, and the authority to manage effective coordination of all stakeholders who engaged in preventive functions. Based on that recommendation, a draft law on the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia was revised to contain a chapter on a national preventive mechanism. The draft law was scheduled to be submitted to the parliament for adoption.

42. OHCHR also supported Mongolia in holding a first national consultation on business and human rights, on 30 November 2018, to deliberate on and develop recommendations for the national strategy to implement the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Participants in the consultation included representatives of line ministries and other government agencies, the Mongolian workers' union, the employers association, the National Human Rights Commission, civil society and United Nations agencies.

43. A second national consultation is scheduled to take place in May 2019 with the participation of the Chair of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises as a resource person. It is expected that the Government will develop a national action plan on business and human rights based on the outcomes of the two national consultations.

44. In addition to national level activities, the Fund was also used to organize a regional workshop in November 2018 in Cabo Verde for lusophone countries, in cooperation with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and UNDP. The workshop aimed at bringing together both the human rights reporting process and Sustainable Development Goal implementation, reporting and monitoring. The workshop drew on the expertise of the National Statistics Institute of Cabo Verde, which led the Praia City Group on Governance Statistics.

45. The workshop focused on sharing good practices in preparation for the reviews, undergoing reviews and implementation of universal periodic review recommendations. It also focused on the implementation of human rights recommendations within the Sustainable Development Goals – including Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). In their conclusions, participants stressed the need to support national bodies and institutions in the implementation of human rights recommendations, taking particular note of those accepted by the State within the context of the universal periodic review. They also emphasized that aligning national development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights was not enough to ensure action, and that Governments needed to develop action plans with clear identification of those responsible, proper budget allocations and key benchmarks and timelines. Participants called for an integrated approach to human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, for example by encouraging direct collaboration between the national coordination bodies responsible for reporting on the universal periodic review and human rights and those responsible for reporting on Sustainable Development Goal and voluntary national reviews.

IV. Financial situation of the Voluntary Fund

Table 1

Statement of income and expenditure for 2018 (1 January 2018–31 December 2018)

(United States dollars)

Income and expenditure

I. Income

Voluntary contributions received in 2018	884 541
Gain/loss on exchange	(4 506)
Pledges received	

<i>Income and expenditure</i>	
Government of Singapore (unpaid)	5 000
Interest and miscellaneous income	44 502
Total income (I)	929 536
II. Expenditure	
Staff costs	77 333
Other personnel costs (consultants' fees and travel)	40 503
Staff travel	—
Travel of representatives/participants to meetings and seminars	28 450
Contractual services	10 892
General operating and other direct costs	19 974
Equipment, vehicles and furniture	20 041
Grants out (<\$50,000) and fellowships	—
Programme support (indirect) costs	25 635
Total expenditure	222 828
Prior year adjustments	206 716
Net excess (shortfall) of income over expenditures for the period	913 424
Opening balance as at 1 January 2018	1 449 575
Unpaid pledges Singapore	(5 000)
Total fund balance as at 31 December 2018	2 357 999

Table 2

Contributions to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance, from the establishment of the Fund to 31 December 2018

(United States dollars)

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Contribution</i>
Biennium 2008–2009	
Colombia	40 000
Russian Federation	450 000
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	45 326
Biennium 2010–2011	
Germany	148 148
Morocco	500 000
Russian Federation	200 000
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	133 707
Biennium 2012–2013	
Australia	387 580
Germany	475 664
Kazakhstan	9 975
Norway	849 114
Biennium 2014–2015	
Germany	242 844
Kazakhstan	53 890
Netherlands	30 000
Norway	601 733
Oman	10 000

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Contribution</i>
Biennium 2016–2017	
France	22 753
Germany	221 631
Kazakhstan	10 000
Norway	475 367
Paraguay	3 000
Republic of Korea	50 000
Saudi Arabia	150 000
Spain	111 485
United Arab Emirates	100 000
2018	
France	23 229
Germany	124 224
Norway	357 270
Pakistan	3 000
Republic of Korea	50 000
Russian Federation	200 000
Saudi Arabia	70 000
Singapore	5 000
Spain	56 818
Total contributions	6 211 158

46. Since the establishment of the Voluntary Fund in 2009 until the end of 2018, 16 States had made financial contributions: Australia, Colombia, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (see table 2).

47. The strengthening of the financial basis of the Voluntary Fund is a positive trend, and one that shows the increasing importance that States attach to the implementation of recommendations arising from the universal periodic review and the reception of dedicated support for that task. Continued donations to the Fund and a widening of the donor base are both crucial to further solidify the long-term sustainability of universal periodic review-related technical cooperation, both during the third but also well into future review cycles.

V. Final considerations

48. The Secretary-General, in his report on strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights (A/72/351), stated that the increased focus on the follow-up to and implementation of recommendations made by human rights mechanisms provided the United Nations system with an opportunity to engage with Member States. International cooperation, including through human rights mechanisms and their recommendations, provided an important basis for States to achieve greater results in both the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights protection at the country level. Technical assistance in the field of human rights should be based on such recommendations and be provided in closer cooperation and partnership with Member States, regional human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and the wider United Nations system.

49. Recommendations of human rights mechanisms, in particular universal periodic review recommendations that are accepted by the State, are one of the best entry points for United Nations system-wide engagement at the national level. The operationalization of the

2030 Agenda, linking it to universal periodic review recommendations, allows the United Nations to assist States in achieving concrete results both in terms of human rights progress and development targets.

50. The conclusions above were also highlighted by participants at the high-level panel on human rights mainstreaming, held on 26 February 2018 during the thirty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council, which focused on the challenges and opportunities resulting from the universal periodic review. The issues for discussion included the importance of universal periodic review recommendations, which can serve as a key entry point for cooperation with and action by Governments, the United Nations system and the international community at large, including donors; contributing to international cooperation through the sharing of best practices; the critical role of coordination mechanisms in reporting and follow-up; strengthening coordination at the United Nations-level through the mainstreaming of human rights into United Nations country team and individual programmes, and the planning and programming of agencies; and strengthening South-South and North-South cooperation and international donor coordination.

51. The panel highlighted that universal periodic review recommendations could be an entry point for cooperation with and action by Governments, the United Nations system and the wider international community, including donors. Common themes in statements and interventions included the importance of the implementation of universal periodic review recommendations, and the potential for better and more focused use of human rights recommendations in system-wide action across the United Nations in support of prevention and the 2030 Agenda.

52. Another source of guidance in carrying out the work of the Fund should be the outcome of the intersessional meeting of the Human Rights Council on dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda, held on 16 January 2019 pursuant to its resolution 37/24. At the meeting, the Council examined numerous aspects of the relationship between the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights. One of the main conclusions was that implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals should increasingly be integrated into the universal periodic review. Member States and other stakeholders had to make better use of the universal periodic review outcomes and reports of the treaty bodies and the special procedures to guide Sustainable Development Goal implementation planning, follow-up and reporting, including in the preparation and consideration of voluntary national reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Participants stressed that it was important that States and other stakeholders continued to share experience and good practices in integrating and aligning the implementation of human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals at the national and international levels.

53. From the third cycle onwards, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights advises Foreign Ministers of countries through a letter sent following the adoption of the universal periodic review third cycle outcome, flagging areas that need particular attention over the four-and-a-half years until the State's next review, and offering support from OHCHR or the United Nations system under the leadership of the respective United Nations resident coordinator.

54. In particular, OHCHR encourages resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to ensure that clustered recommendations of the human rights mechanisms are integrated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework signed at the country level and become part of the Sustainable Development Goal implementation efforts. Indeed, the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework Guidelines acknowledge that recommendations of human rights mechanisms are essential for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Accepted universal periodic review recommendations are an important entry point that is increasingly recognized by OHCHR and the rest of the United Nations system.

55. United Nations agencies and programmes are also encouraged to reflect, as a minimum, accepted universal periodic review recommendations that fall within their mandate in their own entity's planning and programming in-country. Doing so systematically would mobilize the United Nations system in order to support Member

States more effectively in their efforts at strengthening their national human rights protection systems.

56. OHCHR will continuously rethink and revitalize its strategic vision for follow-up support with the advice of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, in order to provide more effective support to States in their efforts to implement, as a minimum, accepted universal periodic review recommendations. Underlying principles for the allocation of Voluntary Fund resources include support for the most pressing thematic human rights issues in a State, and the building of national capacities for implementation that are efficient and sustainable, in line with the vision outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on strengthening United Nations action in the field of human rights (72/351).

57. OHCHR reiterates the importance of the active participation of other stakeholders in the follow-up processes and will endeavour to explore ways through which stakeholders may also benefit from the Voluntary Fund, either directly or indirectly, by becoming involved in the technical cooperation and assistance programmes of the States concerned that are assisted by the Fund.
