



ماعت للسلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان
Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

Ethiopia's position on the UPR mechanism

A working paper issued by the Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights



Introduction

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a mechanism established by the Human Rights Council in 2006, pursuant to resolution 60/251 of the United Nations General Assembly. It aims to assess the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States regularly, ensuring equal treatment for all countries and striving to improve global human rights practices. UPR enhances transparency by enabling states to share actions taken to improve their human rights situations, address violations, and overcome challenges. Additionally, it facilitates the exchange of best practices and provides technical assistance to strengthen states' capacities in addressing human rights issues.

Conducted in cycles, the UPR allows each Member State to be reviewed approximately every four and a half years. Reviews occur three times a year, with 14 states assessed in each cycle. This mechanism serves as a unique platform for strengthening the protection of human rights globally, promoting accountability, cooperation, and continuous improvement.

Ethiopia has undergone four cycles of review under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism: the first in December 2009, the second in May 2014, the third in May 2019, and the most recent cycle in November 2024.

In the first cycle, Ethiopia received **130** recommendations, supporting **98** of them. In the second cycle, it received **260** recommendations and supported **190**. The third cycle yielded **245** recommendations, with Ethiopia supporting **231**. In the last cycle, Ethiopia received 316 recommendations. The country will clarify its position on these recommendations no later than during the fifty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, scheduled from February to April 2025.

Through this paper, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights analyzes the recommendations submitted to Ethiopia, evaluating the state's responses in terms of acceptance or rejection, stating reasons for any rejections, and assessing the extent of Ethiopia's commitment to implementing these recommendations.

Recommendations to Ethiopia

Ethiopia received a total of **951** recommendations across the four review cycles. These recommendations cover a wide range of human rights topics, including accession to conventions and treaties; cooperation with international mechanisms; the rights of children, women, persons with disabilities, migrants, displaced persons, and homeless individuals; the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities; the right to health; political, cultural, and developmental rights; LGBTI rights; community and civic space; gender equality; forced labor; human trafficking; and national legislation.

Of the total recommendations, **130 (13.67%)** called on Ethiopia to **join and ratify international instruments** to which it is not yet a party. Notably, most recommendations urged Ethiopia to ratify the protocols attached to agreements it has already joined. Additionally, many recommendations called for Ethiopia to join and ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court, particularly in light of the crimes committed during armed conflicts in Ethiopia that fall within the court's jurisdiction.

At the international level, Ethiopia is a party to major United Nations treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both ratified in 1993.

Ethiopia has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it ratified in 1981, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1991. In 2014, in response to recommendations received during review cycles, Ethiopia ratified the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning Armed Conflict and the Exploitation of Children.

Additionally, Ethiopia ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1994 and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1976. Furthermore, it acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. Although Ethiopia signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998, it has not yet ratified this treaty, prompting ongoing recommendations for its accession.

At the regional level, Ethiopia ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1998 and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) in 2018. It is also a party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ratified in 2002) and the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects

of Refugee Problems in Africa (ratified in 1973). Additionally, Ethiopia acceded to the Kampala Convention in 2012, following several recommendations to do so.

Despite these commitments, there remain gaps in Ethiopia's human rights obligations. Notably, it has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which aims to establish preventive measures against torture; the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which seeks to abolish the death penalty; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Labour Organization Convention; the Arms Trade Treaty; the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Regarding **international cooperation**, states made **45** key recommendations for Ethiopia to enhance its human rights practices through increased collaboration with UN human rights mechanisms. These recommendations include strengthening human rights frameworks in partnership with relevant UN bodies and ensuring that national structures align with international standards. Specifically, Ethiopia is encouraged to invite UN special procedures to conduct regular visits, particularly those focusing on freedom of expression, education, arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial executions. Furthermore, Ethiopia should grant access to human rights monitors and allow them to conduct visits without restrictions.

Furthermore, States recommended that Ethiopia continue to fulfil its reporting obligations under human rights treaty bodies and enhance its cooperation with international agencies for capacity building and technical assistance.

Finally, a common theme among these recommendations is the importance of integrating human rights into Ethiopia's national development. This includes fostering stronger cooperation with international stakeholders to ensure continued progress in promoting and protecting human rights within the country.

Regarding **children's rights** in Ethiopia, **85** recommendations were made by States during the four sessions. According to UN reports, 10.8 million children in Ethiopia will need emergency humanitarian assistance in 2024. Significant challenges remain in accessing quality education for all children, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas. Child labor continues to be a pressing issue, with many children, especially in rural regions,

engaged in agricultural work, domestic labor, and hazardous occupations. Ethiopia is also a source country for child trafficking, with many children subjected to forced labor, sexual exploitation, and recruitment into armed groups, particularly in conflict-affected areas such as the Tigray region.

The impact of displacement due to armed conflicts poses another major challenge to children's rights in Ethiopia. Ongoing regional conflicts and family displacements, especially in Tigray, have exposed children to severe risks, including separation from their families, sexual violence, and a lack of access to education and healthcare. Although Ethiopia ratified the Kampala Convention in 2012 based on prior recommendations regarding the rights of internally displaced persons, the implementation of preventive measures for displaced children remains inadequate.

Gender-based violence disproportionately affects girls in Ethiopia, with early child marriage being a significant issue. Many girls are married at a young age, leading to early pregnancies, interruptions in their education, and increased risks of domestic violence.

The recommendations from the four sessions urged Ethiopia to ratify relevant protocols and conventions and to integrate and implement them into domestic legislation. They also emphasized the need for legislative reforms and effective government actions to address current gaps and violations concerning children's rights.

With respect to **women's rights**, 100 recommendations were made to address this pressing issue in Ethiopia. These recommendations aim to ensure comprehensive protection for women primarily through the implementation or establishment of laws and legislation, alongside efforts to raise awareness and educate the public on respecting women's rights.

Proposed actions include ensuring women's access to education, accelerating the elimination of gender inequality, and addressing disparities. Specific measures focus on combating gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence, and ensuring the protection of women and children from trafficking, exploitation, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage.

The recommendations also call for removing barriers to women's political participation, ensuring women's representation in decision-making processes, and improving women's economic empowerment by enhancing access to employment opportunities and resources. Strengthening laws to prevent and punish sexual violence and human

trafficking is crucial, along with increasing support for organizations that complement government efforts to address violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

Additionally, the recommendations highlight the need to enact comprehensive laws targeting gender-based violence and discrimination, including provisions to prevent harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. They also emphasize the necessity for legal reforms to address the specific needs of women with disabilities.

Regarding the rights of persons with disabilities, **38** recommendations were made, focusing on promoting inclusive education and equal rights, improving economic opportunities and employment, and adopting legislative and policy reforms that foster inclusion and protection, address discrimination, and promote integration.

The recommendations emphasized the need to promote inclusive education and equal rights for persons with disabilities, ensuring access to quality education and basic services, particularly for vulnerable groups such as girls, children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and those affected by poverty or diseases like HIV/AIDS.

They also called for the implementation of policies and legal frameworks to prohibit discrimination, promote economic and employment opportunities, and facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities into the labor market through training and job creation. Additionally, national strategies should protect the rights of women, children, refugees, and migrants with disabilities while ensuring their full participation in society.

Regarding political, social, economic, and cultural rights, **20** recommendations were made, urging efforts to strengthen the social status and support political and social rights. These recommendations include ensuring that Ethiopia respects fundamental political rights, such as the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and freedom of expression—both online and offline. They also call for a review of legislative measures to ensure compatibility with international agreements, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Specific issues such as arbitrary detention and the establishment of mechanisms to defend freedom of expression, particularly in defamation cases, should be addressed.

The recommendations further stressed the importance of international cooperation in ensuring the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as in combating terrorism and violent extremism, which hinder the effective realization of these rights. Continuous efforts should be made to implement national development plans, improve

national legal and legislative frameworks, and ensure their consistency with relevant international instruments.

In terms of the **protection of refugees, migrants, and displaced persons**, the focus of recommendations in the first and second review cycles was on Ethiopia's need to join and ratify relevant international agreements and instruments, particularly the Kampala Convention. Following Ethiopia's ratification of this Convention, subsequent recommendations centred on addressing the challenges of displacement, homelessness, and the asylum crisis, especially given the high percentage of these groups in Ethiopia due to poverty, armed conflict, and food insecurity.

A total of **28** recommendations were made concerning refugees, displaced persons, and migrants. These included calls to continue protecting internally displaced individuals, enhance the security of refugee camps, and establish accessible complaint mechanisms to address sexual exploitation and abuse. Additionally, there were calls to implement policies that help and protect these vulnerable groups, such as ensuring birth registration and addressing the specific needs of displaced and refugee children.

The recommendations also highlighted the need to strengthen international and national efforts, with technical support, to develop national strategies and action plans to protect migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, there must be ongoing engagement in addressing the root causes of displacement, promoting safe, voluntary, and informed returns, and ensuring non-discriminatory access to education, healthcare, and other basic services.

Concerning the **right to health**, **18** recommendations were made, urging the strengthening of public health initiatives and the development of robust institutional frameworks to effectively tackle future public health challenges. Ethiopia is encouraged to seek technical assistance to address health-related issues and to continue enhancing efforts to improve healthcare access for all citizens, including financial assistance and international cooperation.

In addition, national health strategies must prioritize improving access to and the quality of health care. Overcoming bureaucratic barriers is essential to enhance the efficiency of both public and private health care institutions. Developing national plans to assist specific groups, such as mine victims, is crucial for ensuring their rights and addressing their disability and health-related needs.

Long-term goals include increasing investments in health and expanding universal health coverage by improving health care financing mechanisms. This ensures that all citizens can access basic health services without financial difficulties.

Regarding the right to development, the recommendations highlighted the importance of effectively implementing plans aimed at eradicating poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These plans should foster long-term development and improve the quality of life for all citizens, aligning the 2030 SDGs with human rights frameworks, and proposing cooperation with other countries to integrate these goals into national policies.

The recommendations also emphasized the need to maintain the implementation of the national action plan focused on gender and development issues. Additionally, countries recommended integrating the rights of persons with disabilities into national implementation efforts, monitoring the SDGs, and ensuring inclusiveness in development processes. The recommendations include continuing reforms to address macroeconomic challenges while promoting comprehensive and sustainable social and economic development. Countries urged Ethiopia to work towards achieving self-sufficiency in agricultural development.

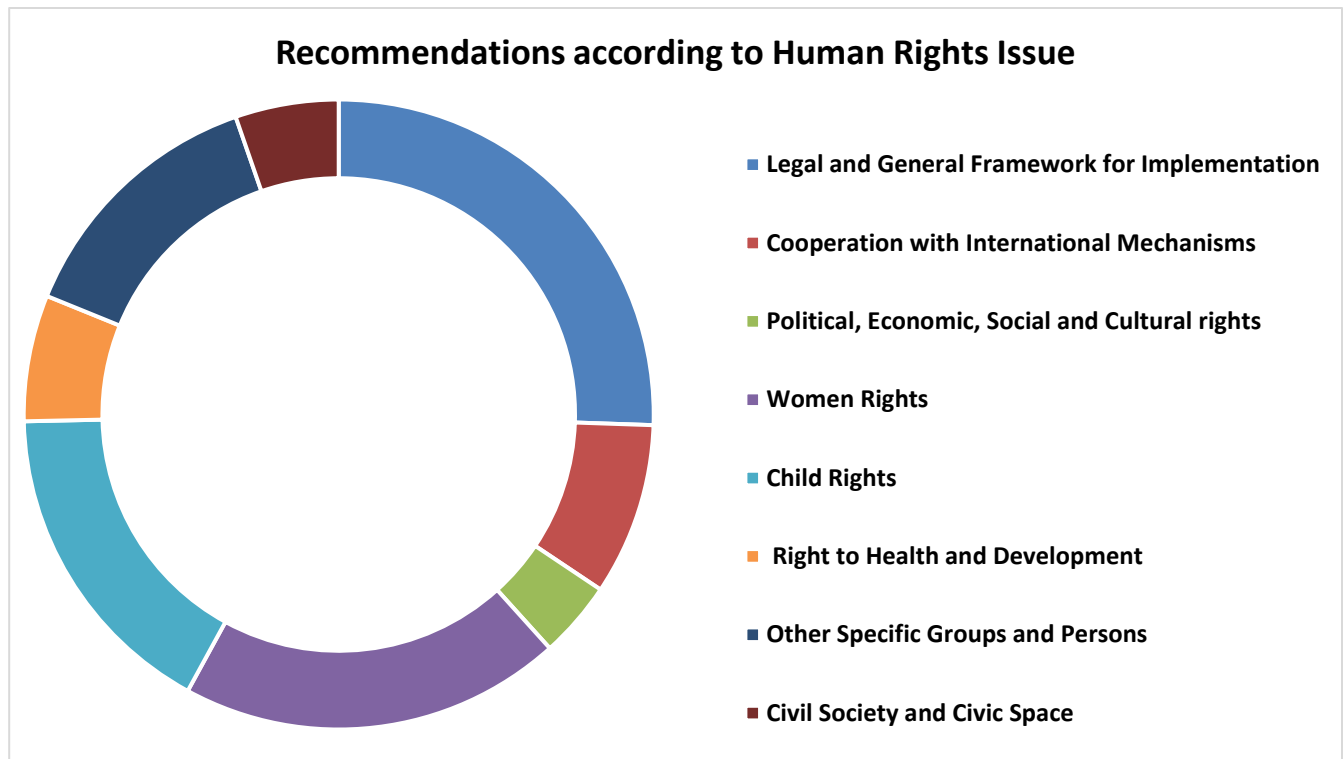
Regarding civil society and civic space, the **27** submitted recommendations included enhancing constructive cooperation with actors engaged in human rights-related activities and ensuring that procedures governing the registration of civil society organizations are consistent with international standards. Recommendations emphasized transparency, non-discrimination, and timely procedures at acceptable costs, with the possibility of appealing these procedures and avoiding the requirement of re-registration for civil society organizations.

Emphasis was also placed on implementing and monitoring the National Human Rights Action Plan, engaging civil society, and providing technical assistance to build the capacity of human rights institutions. Other recommendations included establishing mechanisms for meaningful engagement with civil society at both federal and regional levels, strengthening dialogue forums between civil society and the government, and ensuring effective participation in the prevention and education related to existing laws and policies.

The recommendations stressed the need to review national legislation to ensure a safe environment for civil society, human rights defenders, and journalists, while promoting freedom of expression. They called for the release of individuals detained for exercising their fundamental rights to expression or peaceful assembly and for ensuring genuine participation of civil society and the media in decision-making, while removing legal and procedural obstacles that hinder their activities.

Classification of Recommendations to Ethiopia

The recommendations directed at Ethiopia covered a wide range of human rights topics, with countries focusing more on certain areas based on the prevailing human rights situation. The legal framework received the most attention in the recommendations, while political, economic, social, and cultural rights received comparatively less emphasis.



Over the four review cycles, there has been a significant increase in recommendations related to **legal and implementation frameworks**. Countries encouraged Ethiopia to accede to international treaties to which it has not yet signed, properly implement ratified treaties, and incorporate them into national legislation, or to introduce new laws, policies, or national plans to address human rights issues at the domestic level.

Following legal and legislative recommendations, **women's rights** received significant attention, with countries urging Ethiopia to integrate women into political life, eliminate societal gaps, and protect women from sexual and domestic violence, as well as violence related to conflict.

Children's rights were next in terms of the number of recommendations, focusing on strengthening mechanisms to monitor child abuse, ensuring access to quality education, and addressing violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking of children.

Countries also recommended that Ethiopia **improve its engagement and cooperation with international mechanisms and special rapporteurs** by issuing standing invitations and facilitating their work in the country. Additional recommendations targeted the rights of **vulnerable groups**, including refugees, internally displaced persons, and minorities, calling for the enactment of protective legislation and policies for these populations.

Health-related recommendations emphasized the need to strengthen institutional capacities, launch awareness campaigns, and increase investments in the health sector. Meanwhile, recommendations regarding civic space urged legislative reforms, the lifting of restrictions, and allowing civil society organizations to work freely on human rights issues, with the government encouraged to promote dialogue and cooperation with civil society.

Finally, recommendations concerning **civil, political, and economic rights** received relatively less attention. However, they focused on ensuring freedoms of expression, assembly, and trade union rights, urging Ethiopia to review national laws to align any restrictions on these rights with relevant international treaties.



Most important sustainable development goals in recommendations

In terms of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, the recommendations across the four cycles emphasized the third goal related to good health and well-being, which calls for strengthening institutional capacities in the health sector, launching public health awareness campaigns, and increasing investments to improve healthcare infrastructure and access. They also addressed SDG4 related to quality education,

stressing the need to ensure access for all, especially children, by addressing inequalities in the education system and protecting children from exploitation and abuse.

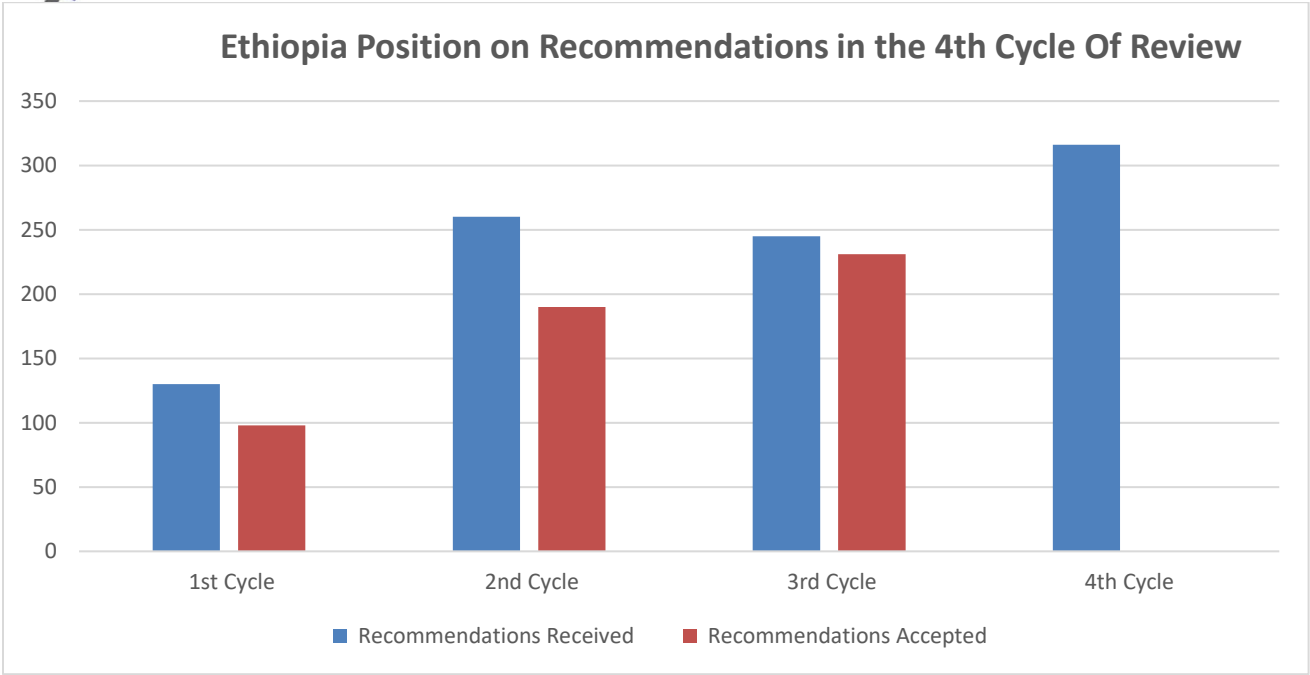
Additionally, SDG5 related to gender equality received particular emphasis, focusing on eliminating gender-based violence, enhancing women's political and social participation, and addressing societal gaps that affect them. Likewise, the eighth goal related to decent work and economic growth stressed the importance of adopting comprehensive policies that support economic opportunities for vulnerable groups, including women, while ensuring workers' rights and reducing employment inequality.

Regarding SDG10 on reducing inequalities, the recommendations emphasized the need to protect marginalized groups such as refugees, minorities, and internally displaced persons by implementing measures that promote social inclusion and reduce disparities. Finally, SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions focused on strengthening legal frameworks, supporting international cooperation, promoting justice, and protecting civil and political rights.

Ethiopia Position on Recommendations

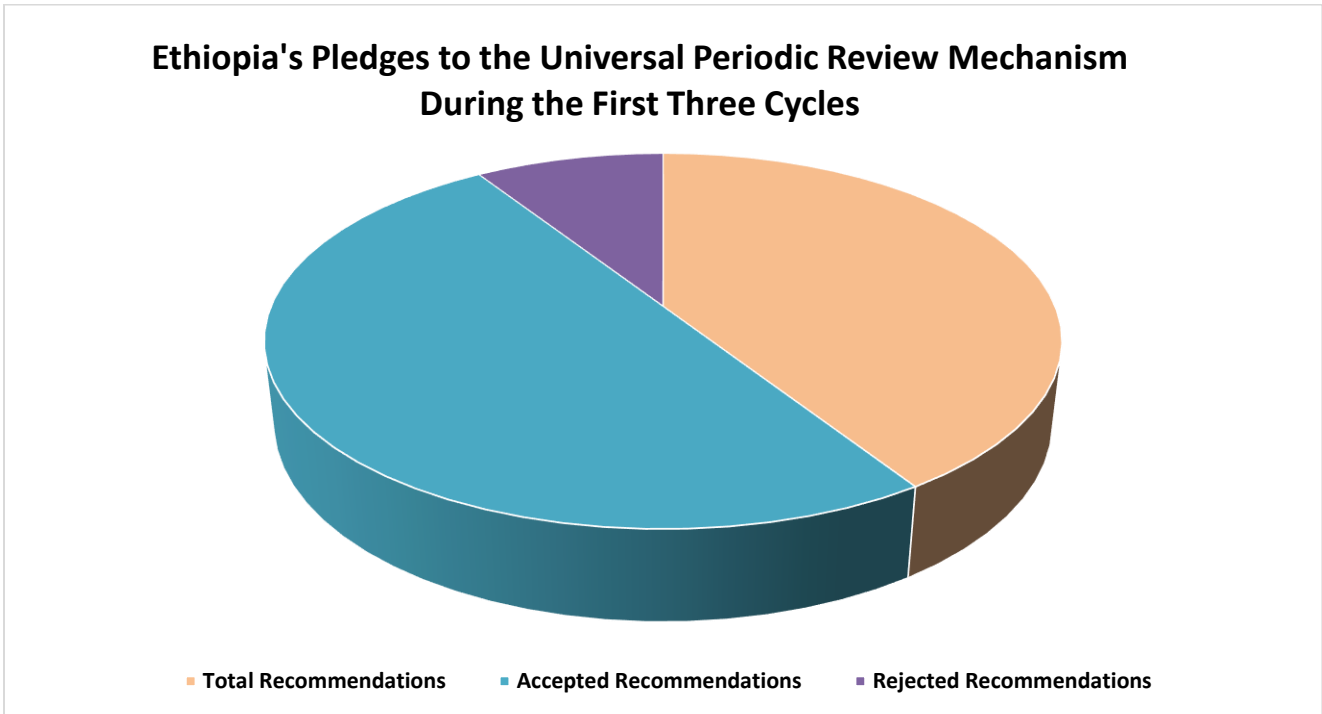
✓ Recommendations

Ethiopia received a total of **951** recommendations across four UPR cycles. During **the first cycle**, it received **130** recommendations, supported **98** of them, and took note of **32**. In the **second cycle**, it received **260** recommendations, supported **190**, and took note of **70**. In the **third cycle**, it received **245** recommendations, supported **231** of them, and took note of **14**. In the **fourth cycle**, it received **316** recommendations, on which Ethiopia has not yet indicated its position.



The graph indicates that the fourth cycle of the review saw the highest number of recommendations submitted compared to the previous three cycles. Ethiopia still needs to clarify its position on these recommendations regarding acceptance or rejection by the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, which will be held from February to April 2025.

Ethiopia Pledges



Regarding Ethiopia's commitments under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, the country accepted 519 out of 635 recommendations, representing 81.73%, while rejecting 116 recommendations, or 18.27%.

Ethiopia pledged to enhance its cooperation with United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms, engage in constructive dialogue on human rights issues, promote the rule of law and gender equality, and address human rights issues in conflict areas, especially by mitigating the impact of armed conflicts on civilians. The pledges also included improving the human rights situation within its borders through a series of legal and policy reforms aimed at enhancing the protection of civil, political, and economic rights. However, Ethiopia has experienced a significant deterioration in the protection of human rights, particularly for vulnerable groups, especially in conflict-affected areas, alongside weaknesses in national laws addressing inequalities and violence against women and girls.

In terms of actions taken on previous pledges, Ethiopia has not fully complied with many of its commitments, particularly regarding accession to international conventions and their protocols. The challenge of resolving internal armed conflicts remains significant. A review of the recommendations made across the four cycles reveals that calls for accession to treaties, particularly the Convention against Torture and the Convention on Enforced Disappearance, continue to be repeated. Recommendations related to women's rights and the elimination of violence and sexual exploitation against vulnerable groups, such as children and women, have also been consistently reiterated.

Furthermore, recommendations concerning civic space and the freedom of peaceful assembly were repeated throughout the review cycles, despite Ethiopia's pledge to consider or accept these recommendations. Several recommendations emphasized the necessity of cooperating with United Nations mechanisms and special rapporteurs, facilitating their work within Ethiopia, extending permanent invitations for these rapporteurs to visit, and submitting periodic reports to relevant international bodies.

Results & Recommendations

The fourth cycle of Universal Periodic Review of Republic of Ethiopia witnessed the largest number of recommendations received during all four review cycles, totalling 316. This presents a significant challenge for Ethiopia to implement these recommendations, given the turbulent conditions and severe internal conflict in the country, alongside the immense suffering of Ethiopian people. Special attention must be given to recommendations related to joining international treaties and covenants that Ethiopia has yet to ratify. It is crucial to prioritize recommendations focused on justice and accountability for perpetrators of crimes during armed conflicts, as well as the integration of marginalized groups into society. Additionally, enhancing cooperation with civil society and increasing their participation in internal affairs is essential.

Accordingly, Maat presents the following recommendations:

- ✓ **Strengthening Cooperation with International Mechanisms:** Ethiopia should continue to enhance cooperation with United Nations bodies and international human rights mechanisms, including Economic and Social Council, to fulfil its obligations and promote human rights within the country.
- ✓ **Focus on human rights in conflict zones:** Ethiopia should make greater efforts to protect human rights in conflict-affected areas, such as the Tigray region, and strengthen measures to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance.
- ✓ **Strengthen domestic laws and regulations:** Ethiopia should continue to update its domestic laws in line with international human rights standards, including preventing impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations and ensuring accountability and redress for victims.
- ✓ **Encourage community participation:** Strengthen the role of civil society in monitoring human rights, and open the space for NGOs to participate more broadly in the human rights dialogue in the country.
- ✓ **Continue working on judicial reforms:** Ethiopia should decide on judicial reforms to ensure the independence of the judiciary and enhance the capacity to prosecute human rights violations fairly and effectively.