



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 6

Universal periodic review

## Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review\*

### Singapore

### Addendum

**Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments  
and replies presented by the State under review**

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



1. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) continues to be an opportunity for Singapore to engage with other States and share experiences in the area of human rights.
2. As a small-island city-state with a diverse and multi-ethnic population, Singapore takes a practical and outcomes-based approach to implementing our human rights obligations. This involves the careful balancing of competing rights according to our national priorities and unique circumstances. Singapore's approach to human rights is premised on two tenets. First, human rights do not exist in a vacuum and must take into account a country's specific circumstances including cultural, social, economic, and historical contexts. Second, the rule of law is an essential pre-condition for the promotion and protection of human rights.
3. With these two fundamental principles in mind, the Inter-Ministry Committee on Human Rights (IMC-HR) has reviewed the 324 recommendations that Singapore received at the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the UPR Working Group in May 2021. We support the majority of recommendations which are consistent with our ongoing efforts to ensure that Singapore continues to be an inclusive, cohesive, and resilient society.
4. For many of the recommendations we have noted, Singapore already has legislation and policies that address the underlying objectives in ways that best suit our unique social and cultural context. Singapore has not supported recommendations which are predicated on unfounded assertions, inaccurate assumptions, or erroneous information. We also cannot implement recommendations that are not appropriate in our national context.

## **Building an inclusive society**

5. **Singapore supports recommendation 59.43.**
6. **Singapore supports recommendation 59.107.**

## **Children and youth**

7. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.254, 59.275, 59.276 and 59.277** as we are fully committed to our obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
8. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.27 and 59.28** to ratify the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OP-CRC-SC). Singapore is taking steps towards meeting the requirements of the OP-CRC-SC.
9. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.253, 59.255, 59.256, 59.257, 59.258, 59.259, 59.260, 59.263, 59.267, 59.268, and 59.272.** Singapore continuously reviews our policies to ensure that vulnerable groups, including children, are protected. The Criminal Justice Reform Act 2018 enhanced protection for victims of sexual or child abuse offences, and reduced the stress they face in the criminal justice system. In 2019, we amended the Penal Code to strengthen protection for children and youths against sexual exploitation. The Children and Young Persons Act was also amended in the same year to extend protection to abused and neglected children from below 16 years to below 18 years.
10. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.197, 59.199, and 59.200** as we are committed to improving access to quality and affordable preschools and providing a good start for every child, especially children from lower-income households. Our annual spending on early childhood education tripled between 2012 and 2018 and will double to reach over S\$2 billion (US\$1.52 billion) in the next few years. More importantly, the outcomes of our education system and high performance of our students are self-evident.

## **Women**

11. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.213, 59.214, 59.215, 59.216, 59.217, 59.218, 59.219, 59.221, 59.222, 59.223, 59.224, 59.225, 59.226, 59.227, 59.228, 59.230, 59.232, 59.233, 59.234, 59.235, 59.236, 59.238, 59.239, 59.240, 59.241, 59.245, 59.246, 59.247, 59.251 and 59.252.** Singapore's approach to gender equality is founded on the

principle of meritocracy where women in Singapore participate fully and equally in all spheres of life and at all levels. In 2017, Singapore's first female President, Halimah Yacob, was elected into office.

12. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 59.237.** We regularly review our legislation to protect women and girls against violence. In 2019, we expanded the definition of rape under the Penal Code and repealed marital immunity for rape.

13. **Singapore notes recommendation 59.231.** The principle of equality of all persons before the law is already enshrined in the Singapore Constitution.

## Family

14. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.264 and 59.265.**

## Persons with disabilities

15. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.73, 59.280, 59.281, 59.282, 59.283, 59.284, 59.285, 59.287, 59.288, 59.289, 59.290, 59.291, 59.292, 59.293, 59.294, 59.295 and 59.296.** Singapore strives to build an inclusive society where persons with disabilities are enabled to participate fully. Since 2007, Singapore has developed Enabling Masterplans, comprising measures to integrate persons with disabilities into society. We are currently developing the next Enabling Masterplan for 2022 to 2030.

16. **Singapore notes recommendation 59.286.** The Mental Capacity Act preserves the legal capacity of a person with intellectual or cognitive disability to the extent that he is able to decide for himself in relation to the specified matter at the material time.

## Elderly persons

17. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.96, 59.97, 59.99 and 59.100.**

## Lower-income group

18. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.186, 59.188, 59.189 and 59.190.** Singapore's social safety net comprises multiple layers of support, with more resources channelled to low-income and vulnerable Singaporeans. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we rolled out various assistance schemes to support low-to-middle income households. We continuously review and strengthen social protection measures, as necessary.

## Trafficking in persons

19. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.143, 59.144, 59.145, 59.146, 59.147, 59.148, 59.149, 59.153, 59.154, 59.155, 59.156, 59.157, 59.158, 59.266, 59.269, 59.270, 59.271 and 59.273.** Singapore enacted the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) in 2015 to specifically combat trafficking in persons (TIP). The definition of TIP in the Act is aligned to that under the UN TIP Protocol.

20. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 59.150, 59.151 and 59.152.** Victim protection and assistance is prescribed under the PHTA, and TIP victims are provided with shelter and counselling services where necessary.

## Migrant and labour rights

21. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.242, 59.243 and 59.244.**

22. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.300, 59.302, 59.303, 59.304, 59.306, 59.307, 59.311, 59.314, 59.315, 59.316, 59.318, 59.319, 59.320, 59.321, 59.322, 59.323 and**

**59.324.** We will continuously review and improve measures to safeguard migrant workers' well-being. We are implementing a comprehensive plan to support migrant workers' medical and mental health needs. A multi-stakeholder taskforce on mental health addressing depression, awareness of mental health needs, mental wellness and normalising them back to the workforce (Project DAWN) has been established.

**23. Singapore supports in part recommendations 59.305, 59.308, 59.312 and 59.313.** We have legislation on the maximum amount that Singapore-based employment agencies can collect from a migrant worker. Mandatory testing for pregnancy and infectious diseases is required for the health and well-being of both migrant workers and the general population.

**24. Singapore notes recommendations 59.301, 59.309 and 59.310.** Migrant workers, including foreign domestic workers, are protected through legislation, policies, and measures. The Ministry of Manpower, in partnership with civil society organisations, engages domestic workers and their employers, and works with the medical fraternity to identify signs of abuse or distress.

## **Education**

**25. Singapore supports recommendations 59.198, 59.201, 59.202, 59.203, 59.204, 59.205, 59.206, 59.207, 59.208, 59.209, 59.210, 59.211, 59.212.** Education for our children and youths and lifelong learning for adult Singaporeans are national priorities. We have financial aid programmes to support children in need. Singapore also launched the SkillsFuture initiative, a national movement to develop an integrated system of education, training, and career progression, and to foster lifelong learning.

**26. Singapore supports in part recommendations 59.52, 59.195 and 59.196.** We continue to provide quality education that is student-centric and values-driven, in line with the CRC. We will continue to ensure access to affordable and quality education for Singaporeans.

## **Healthcare**

**27. Singapore supports recommendations 59.90, 59.94, 59.191, 59.192, 59.193 and 59.194.** We will continue to ensure that Singapore's response to COVID-19 is effective and inclusive, further strengthen the public health system, and ensure the highest standard of health.

## **Building a cohesive society**

### **Preserving social harmony**

**28. Singapore supports recommendations 59.126, 59.127 and 59.129.**

**29. Singapore supports recommendation 59.120.** The Public Prosecutor's decision not to issue a Certificate of Substantive Assistance under the Misuse of Drugs Act can be subjected to judicial review under Singapore law.

**30. Singapore supports in part recommendation 59.261.** Singapore regularly reviews our laws and policies. Caning is the only form of corporal punishment allowed and involves many safeguards. Singapore continues to educate and encourage parents to use alternative disciplinary methods. Our schools have struck a judicious balance between discipline and care, to create an environment conducive for students' learning and development.

**31. Singapore notes recommendations 59.121, 59.122, 59.123, 59.124, 59.125, 59.128, 59.130, 59.131, 59.132, 59.133, 59.134, 59.135, 59.136, 59.137, 59.138, 59.139, 59.140, 59.141, 59.142 and 59.262.** Capital punishment is reserved only for the most serious crimes such as murder and drug trafficking. Corporal punishment is meted out only for serious crimes such as sexual and violent offences after due judicial process and is subject to strict

medical safeguards. In schools, caning as a disciplinary measure utilised in the best interests of the child does not contravene the CRC. Caning can only be carried out as a last resort for very serious errant behaviour, with the overall approach being restorative.

32. **Singapore notes recommendation 59.159.** National Service remains critical to Singapore's defence. It underpins our peace and prosperity and safeguards our independence and sovereignty. It is thus a universal and shared responsibility, and no one should be excused.

33. **Singapore notes recommendation 59.317.** Given our constraints as a small city-state, Singapore is not in a position to accept refugees and asylum seekers. Nonetheless, we assist and ensure the safe departure of such persons to a third country by coordinating with organisations such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, where appropriate. Singapore respects the principle of non-refoulement under customary international law.

34. **Singapore supports recommendation 59.58.** Singapore fully respects our obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the CRC.

35. **Singapore supports recommendation 59.66.** We are committed to protecting all vulnerable groups from discrimination, and regularly review our laws and policies to ensure their effectiveness and relevance.

36. **Singapore notes recommendations 59.54, 59.55, 59.56, 59.57 and 59.229.** The Singapore Constitution enshrines the principle of equality of all persons before the law. We have laws and policies to protect our people from discrimination.

## Protecting racial and religious harmony

37. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.59, 59.61, 59.63, 59.65, 59.67, 59.69, 59.70, 59.71, 59.72, 59.101, 59.102, 59.103, 59.104, 59.105 and 59.106.** Singapore's approach to preserving and strengthening social cohesion is anchored on three pillars: legislation that safeguards racial and religious harmony; policies that foster social integration and protect the interest of minorities; and programmes that mobilise the community to build mutual respect and understanding.

38. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.297, 59.298 and 59.299.** Our Constitution affirms that all are equal before the law, regardless of race or religion. We established the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, which ensures that bills before Parliament do not discriminate against any race or religion. The Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act was amended in 2019 to respond more effectively to incidents of religious disharmony and strengthen safeguards against foreign influences that may threaten religious harmony.

39. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 59.160.** The vast majority of female Muslim officers in the Public Service are already allowed to wear the *tudung*, except for those in uniform. Singapore will allow female Muslim public healthcare staff to wear a *tudung* with their uniform from November 2021.

## Rule of law and access to justice

40. **Singapore supports recommendation 59.183.**

41. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.248, 59.249 and 59.250** to strengthen efforts to support victims of domestic violence. Singapore also has robust legislation criminalising domestic violence under the Women's Charter and the Penal Code.

42. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 59.53.** Law enforcement officers are trained to deal impartially and professionally with all victims and suspects.

43. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.274 and 59.278.** In 2019, the Penal Code was amended to raise the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility from 7 to 10 years of age.

44. **Singapore notes recommendation 59.279.** Life imprisonment is only meted out to offenders aged below 18 for the most serious offences such as murder. Generally, the Court will consider the gravity of the offence committed as well as other factors such as the offender's age, antecedents, culpability, aggravating factors, and mitigating factors in deciding the appropriate sentence.

### **Freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association**

45. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.162, 59.170, 59.171 and 59.173.** Our laws and policies on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association comply with the relevant international human rights laws.

46. **Singapore supports in part recommendations 59.166 and 59.168.** Singapore takes a balanced and pragmatic approach to content regulation.

47. **Singapore notes recommendations 59.161, 59.163, 59.164, 59.165, 59.167, 59.169, 59.172, 59.174, 59.175, 59.176, 59.177, 59.178, 59.179, 59.180 and 59.181.** The right to freedom of speech, expression and assembly is guaranteed under the Singapore Constitution. Consistent with international human rights law, this right is not unfettered and must be exercised responsibly, including to secure respect for the rights of others. In Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious society, a balance must be struck between an individual's freedom of speech and the need to preserve a harmonious society.

### **Protection of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community**

48. **Singapore supports recommendation 59.182.**

49. **Singapore notes recommendations 59.74, 59.75, 59.76, 59.77, 59.78, 59.79, 59.80, 59.81, 59.82, 59.83, 59.84, 59.85, 59.86, 59.87, 59.88 and 59.89.** Although Section 377A of the Penal Code remains in our statute books, it is not enforced. All Singapore citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation, are free to pursue their activities in their private space. We firmly oppose discrimination and harassment and have laws to protect all our citizens from such conduct. We will continue to manage the issue of LGBT rights in a sensitive and pragmatic way, so as to protect the vulnerable, uphold the family and preserve the common space for the diverse communities in Singapore.

### **Building a resilient society**

#### **Protecting vulnerable groups**

50. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.60, 59.62, 59.64, 59.68, 59.91, 59.92, 59.93, 59.95, 59.98, 59.184, 59.185, 59.187 and 59.220** to protect the rights of vulnerable groups including children, women, persons with disabilities and older persons. We have social safety nets to provide help where family and community support is inadequate.

#### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

51. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.108 and 59.109.** We continue to implement policies to progress towards the full attainment of the SDGs.

52. **Singapore notes recommendation 59.110.** Singapore adopts a practical approach to business and human rights. We already implement initiatives in the area of corporate social responsibility.

## **Climate change**

53. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.111, 59.113, 59.114, 59.117, 59.119** to take measures and strengthen efforts to address climate change.

54. **Singapore supports in part recommendations 59.112, 59.115, 59.116 and 59.118.** Where appropriate, Singapore implements and reviews our legislation, policies and measures on sustainability and climate change. Singapore also engages citizens, via various channels, on climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainability issues.

## **Ratification of treaties**

55. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.2, 59.3, 59.8, 59.11, 59.13, 59.15, 59.17, 59.19, 59.24, 59.38, 59.39.** Singapore takes our treaty obligations seriously and we have a process under our IMC-HR to actively review our ability to ratify additional human rights treaties.

56. **Singapore notes recommendations 59.1, 59.4, 59.5, 59.6, 59.7, 59.9, 59.10, 59.12, 59.14, 59.16, 59.18, 59.20, 59.21, 59.22, 59.23, 59.25, 59.26, 59.29, 59.30, 59.31, 59.32, 59.33, 59.34, 59.35, 59.36 and 59.37.** We are unable to commit to ratifying any further treaties at this point. While Singapore may not be party to a particular human rights treaty yet, our outcomes are already fully or largely in compliance with its objectives.

## **Establishment of a national human rights institution**

57. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.40 and 59.41.**

58. **Singapore notes recommendations 59.49 and 59.50** to establish a national human rights institution. We have put in place interlocking legislation, institutions and mechanisms that allow us to protect and promote the human rights of all Singaporeans. Singaporeans have many direct avenues to air their grievances. The IMC-HR engages civil society and coordinates the implementation of human rights policies.

59. **Singapore supports recommendations 59.44, 59.45, 59.46, 59.47, 59.48 and 59.51.**

60. **Singapore notes recommendation 59.42.** We welcome visits from UN Special Procedures on mutually agreed upon terms and when the visit will add value to both parties.