

Draft Concept Note

Ambassadorial Dialogue: Advancing the Right to Health and Global Health Equity in the Context of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Date: Tuesday 8 September 2026

Time: 16:00 to 18:00 followed by cocktail apéritif

In-person and online

Venue: CeHDI, Kyoto Building, 3rd Floor

42 chemin du Pommier, 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex

I. Background and Context

The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a binding human rights obligation, enshrined in the WHO Constitution, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and other core instruments, requiring states to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to health on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. Yet for billions of people this right remains unrealised. Half the world's population still lacks access to essential health services, health systems in many developing countries remain underfunded and under-resourced, and access to medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, and other health products is too often determined by geography and income rather than need.

The right to health also carries obligations beyond national borders. Under Article 2(1) of the ICESCR, states have committed to international cooperation and assistance for its progressive realisation, a duty the COVID-19 pandemic showed to be honoured more in word than in deed, when developing countries were last in line for vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics (VDTs). The World Health Organization (WHO) Pandemic Agreement and the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system being negotiated as an Annex to the Agreement, offer an opportunity to give this duty effect, ensuring that countries sharing pathogen materials and data receive equitable benefits in return, including access to medical products and the capacity to produce them. Securing equity in access and production of VDTs is therefore a matter of fulfilling the right to health.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is the United Nations' principal mechanism for holding all states accountable for their human rights obligations, and a powerful yet underutilised avenue for advancing the right to health. Every 4.5 years, all 193 Member States undergo a peer review, presenting national reports, receiving recommendations, and making public commitments to reform. The potential of the UPR remains underused, as many delegations face capacity constraints in framing health outcomes in human rights language, identifying strategic recommendations and tracking implementation.

This event brings together practical tools and a high-level dialogue to help developing countries leverage the UPR more effectively for the right to health.

II. Objectives of the Event

The event aims to:

- Launch the South Centre Toolkit on **Leveraging the Universal Periodic Review to Advance the Rights of Women and Girls to the Highest Attainable Standards of Health**, and present the **Health & Rights Observatory**, the innovative digital analytics platform developed by the Global Center for Health Diplomacy and Inclusion (CeHDI). Together, these tools enable users to leverage the UPR to advance the right to health, analyse

at country level UPR health-related outputs, map recommendations linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and track the implementation of right to health commitments across review cycles.

- Foster dialogue on leveraging the UPR to advance the right to health broadly, and more specifically the right to health of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
- Reflect on the WHO Pandemic Agreement and PABS negotiations through the lens of the right to health and explore how the UPR can be leveraged to hold states accountable for the duty of international cooperation in realising it.

III. Description of the Event

This event combines the presentation of two practical tools anchored in the right to health and global health equity, to help developing countries make full use of the UPR:

- **The South Centre Toolkit**, a practical, human rights-based resource developed explicitly for and with developing-country delegations seeking to advance the right to health of women and girls through the UPR.
- **The CeHDI Health & Rights Observatory**, an interactive digital platform that aggregates and analyses UPR outputs across review cycles, enabling users to map health-related recommendations to Sustainable Development Goal targets (including SDG 3), identify recommendation trends by region, country, or theme, and monitor the implementation of right to health commitments over time.

The Ambassadorial panel will address how developing countries can leverage the UPR to advance the right to health. Ambassadors and senior delegates will have an opportunity reflect on the UPR as an accountability avenue for the right to health broadly, and more specifically for the right to health of women and girls, including SRHRs, drawing on the Toolkit and the Observatory and exchanging experiences on framing, coalition-building and follow-through across review cycles.

The panel will also widen the lens to the international dimension of the right to health. Ambassadors and senior delegates, including those active in the negotiations, will have the opportunity to reflect on the WHO Pandemic Agreement and its PABS system through a human rights frame: how the duty of international cooperation under the right to health bears on equitable access to medical products and the capacity of countries to produce them. The discussion will also consider how the UPR can be leveraged to give this duty effect, through national reports, peer recommendations, and voluntary commitments that hold states accountable for their international cooperation obligations.

IV. Target Audience and Participation

This event is organised by the South Centre and CeHDI and is open to:

- Member States of the South Centre
- Member States of the Group of 77 and China (G77)
- Ambassadors and senior diplomats in Geneva, ministry officials, and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)

V. Venue

The event will be held on Tuesday 8 September 2026 at CeHDI, Kyoto Building, 3rd Floor, 42 chemin du Pommier, 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex, from 16:00 to 18:00, followed by a networking apéritif. In-person participation is limited to 40 registered participants. On-line participation will be available to all other registered participants. The working language of the event is English. No interpretation will be provided.

VI. Tentative Programme

Time	Session	Speakers / Facilitators
16:00–16:10	Opening Remarks and Institutional Welcome	Representatives from the South Centre and CeHDI
16:10–16:25	Presentation of the Tools Presentation of the South Centre Toolkit and the CeHDI Health & Rights Observatory.	South Centre (Toolkit) CeHDI (Observatory)
16:25–17:30	Panel - Advancing the Right to Health: the UPR and Global Health Equity A high-level panel on using the UPR to advance the right to health broadly, and more specifically the right to health of women and girls. The panel will also reflect on the WHO Pandemic Agreement and PABS negotiations through the right to health, including how the UPR can be leveraged to hold states accountable for the duty of international cooperation.	Moderator: H.E. Dr. Abdallah Saleh Possi Permanent Representative of Tanzania Panelists: H.E. Dr. Leslie Ramsammy Permanent Representative of Guyana H.E. Matthew Anthony Wilson Permanent Representative of Barbados H.E. Zaheer Laher Permanent Representative of South Africa H.E. Ever Mlilo, Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe (TBC) H.E. Thomas Gürber Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and the other international organisations in Geneva (TBC) The panel will reflect on the following questions: - Can capacity building in the UPR process support advancing the right to health? - What are examples of how countries are advancing the right to health for women and girls? - How can a human rights approach and the UPR process support the implementation of the Pandemic Agreement including its future Annex to advance health equity? - How can State duties on international cooperation be leveraged?
17:30–17:40	Closing Remarks	South Centre and CeHDI
17:40	Networking Apéritif	In-person participants

VII. Outcomes

Participants will leave the event equipped with concrete tools and insights to strengthen accountability on the right to health through the UPR. The event offers a practical opportunity to strengthen your delegation's use of the UPR to advance the right to health, to exchange experience directly with peers, and to engage with the negotiators and tools shaping global health equity ahead of the next review cycle.

They will gain:

- Understanding of the South Centre Toolkit, designed as a human rights-based working resource for advancing the right to health of women and girls through the UPR mechanism.
- Guided introduction to the CeHDI Health & Rights Observatory digital dashboard, enabling ongoing analysis of UPR health outputs and tracking of right to health commitments.
- Insights from the panel on leveraging the UPR to advance the right to health broadly, and specifically the right to health of women and girls, including SRHR.
- Insights from the panel's reflection on the Pandemic Agreement and the negotiation of its Annex, and its interaction with human rights including how the UPR can be leveraged to advance the right to health and to hold States accountable for the duty of international cooperation.
- Connections to a developing-country peer network committed to using the UPR as a vehicle for right to health accountability.