

HRC@20

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

19 June 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Human Rights Council. This program outlines events organized by various stakeholders of the Council, including panels of the **2026 Annual Conference of the Geneva Human Rights Hub**. Events will reflect on the Council's achievements, its functioning and its evolution within the broader UN human rights system and encourage further reflection on the Council's future.

WEEK OF 15 TO 19 JUNE 2026
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

EVENTS WILL INCLUDE

Expert round-tables on different aspects of the Council, including standard setting on legal instruments and soft-law, guidance and interpretation in the digital domain and the widening of engagement and inclusion of new stakeholders in the Council. **HRC Side Events** to address the entire diplomatic community, as well as **receptions and social events**, public or by invitation-only.

EVENTS WILL EXPLORE

- Standard Setting
- Interpretation and Guidance
- Prevention and Implementation.

PROGRAMME



20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

MONDAY, 15 JUNE – OPENING

6:00pm - Restaurant des Délégués

Official Reception hosted by Switzerland (Confederation, Canton, City)

Opening the anniversary week with a high-level diplomatic gathering

TUESDAY, 16 JUNE

9:00am - 12:00pm - GHRH Annual Conference Roundtable - HRC@20

The Human Rights Council at 20: Standard-Setting Achievements and Future Perspectives

From its first resolution A/HRC/RES/1/1 adopting the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to the recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, this roundtable will assess the Human Rights Council's record in developing international standards, identify key lessons from its first two decades, and explore future avenues to strengthen its standard-setting role and enhance human rights protection globally.

1:00pm - 2:00pm - HRC Side Event

The HRC at 20 - A Lifeline for Defenders

In this stock-taking event, civil society actors will reflect on the Council's value for Human Rights Defenders and its impact on HRDs' work at the national level. Panellists will share their experience of engaging with the Council and its mechanisms, and highlight, among other things:

How the HRC fits in civil society's advocacy strategies and 'theory of change'; Why HRDs invest in HRC advocacy, the UPR process, special procedures and independent investigative mechanisms set up by the HRC; What the HRC and its mechanisms deliver for civil society (including outcomes, such as resolutions, reports/visibility, and impact in terms of protection/safety) and How HRDs use HRC outcomes in their national level work.

2:00pm - 3:00pm - HRC Side Event

Track record of 20 years of standard setting by the HRC

From ICED to the Right to Environment, the track record of 20 years of standard setting in legal instruments and soft law by the HRC.

WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE

Open for partner-led initiatives

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 18 JUNE – INNOVATION & FUTURE PRACTICE

9:00am - 12:00pm - GHRH Annual Conference Roundtable - HRC@20

Interpretation and Guidance in the Digital Age

Digitalisation, AI and emerging technologies raise two connected questions for the Human Rights Council: how to interpret human rights law in changing digital contexts, and how digital tools can strengthen the monitoring and implementation of recommendations, including by better connecting Geneva processes with national follow-up.

1:00pm - 2:00pm (TBD) - GCSP Geneva Security Debate on HRC@20

Event organized by GCSP and the Lake Room Initiative at Maison de la Paix

2:00pm - 3:00pm - HRC Side Event

Models of platform regulation and HRC output on national regulation

The impact of HRC output to regional and national regulation strengthening users' rights in the online sphere. The event will highlight challenges and opportunities for ensuring effective human rights protection in the digital sphere and put forward key recommendations for States and other actors on how to regulate online platforms.

FRIDAY, 19 JUNE – 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HRC / NATIONAL DRESS DAY

9:00am - 12:00pm - GHRH Annual Conference Roundtable - HRC@20

Expanding Participation and Strengthening Implementation

The Human Rights Council's first twenty years have seen a gradual widening of participation beyond States, including through the engagement of NHRIs, Indigenous Peoples and local and regional governments. The discussion will explore how these actors gain access, recognition and voice within the Council, and how their engagement can strengthen implementation, follow-up and prevention by connecting Geneva-based processes with realities on the ground.

12:30pm - 2:30pm - Special Event organized by the HRC President

Twenty Years, One Council: What We Have Built, and Where We Go Next

Informal High-Level Discussion on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Human Rights Council

Evening - National Dress Day

Closing of the anniversary week