General Assembly Elects 18 Member States to Human Rights Council, Authorizes Dates of Conference for Establishing Nuclear‑Weapon‑Free Zone in Middle East

Speakers Pay Tribute to Former President of Algeria, Twenty‑Ninth Assembly Session

October 14, 2021

UN Press Release

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/ga12373.doc.htm>

The General Assembly today elected 18 Member States to the Human Rights Council, the United Nations body responsible for promoting and protecting all human rights around the globe, and paid tribute to Abdelaziz Bouteflika, a former President of Algeria and of the Assembly during its twenty‑ninth session.

Mr. Bouteflika, who died on 17 September at age 84, was the youngest person to be elected to the Assembly when he assumed the post at age 37 in 1974, while also serving as Algeria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs.

By secret ballot, the Assembly elected Argentina, Benin, Cameroon, Eritrea, Finland, Gambia, Honduras, India, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Qatar, Somalia, United Arab Emirates and the United States to the Human Rights Council.  All 18 members will serve three‑year terms beginning on 1 January 2022.

The newly elected States are replacing the following outgoing members:  Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Czech Republic, Denmark, Eritrea, Fiji, India, Italy, Philippines, Somalia, Togo and Uruguay.  In accordance with Assembly resolution 60/251, those Member States were eligible for immediate re‑election, except delegations that had already served two consecutive terms — the Philippines and Togo.

The 18 new members were elected according to the following pattern:  five seats for the African States; five seats for the Asia‑Pacific States; two seats for the Eastern European States; three seats for the Latin American and Caribbean States; and three seats for Western European and other States.

Newly elected to the Geneva‑based Human Rights Council were Benin, Finland, Gambia, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and United States.

Assembly President Abdulla Shahid (Maldives) announced that the following States will continue as members of the Council:  Armenia, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, France, Gabon, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Libya, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sudan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan and Venezuela.

Created by the General Assembly in March 2006 as the principal United Nations entity dealing with human rights, the Human Rights Council comprises 47 elected Member States.  On the basis of equitable geographical distribution, Council seats are allocated to the five regional groups as follows:  African States, 13 seats; Asia-Pacific States, 13 seats; Eastern European States, six seats; Latin American and Caribbean States, eight seats; and Western European and other States, seven seats.

Abdulla Shahid (Maldives), President of the General Assembly, led the Assembly’s tribute to Mr. Bouteflika, who in 1974 became one of the youngest persons ever elected as Assembly President.  It was during his term that the Assembly adopted resolution 3236 on the Question of Palestine, Mr. Shahid said, adding that Mr. Bouteflika also played an important role in the Non‑Aligned Movement and the “Group of 77” developing countries and China.  He believed in international cooperation and solidarity, defended decolonization processes and upheld the value of human rights.  He also believed in empowering women through greater participation in decision‑making.  “He showed us that yes, it is possible for the United Nations to be a community of nations united,” Mr. Shahid said, adding:  “His contributions are now part of the annals of diplomatic history.”

António Guterres, Secretary‑General of the United Nations, said that Mr. Bouteflika was particularly active in decolonization issues and strongly advocated for a more inclusive United Nations in the post‑Second World War era.  Many will remember that in 1974, he invited former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to address the Assembly.  He played a central role in the Non‑Aligned Movement and took a firm stand against apartheid in South Africa, whose membership in the Organization was suspended under his Presidency.  He also supported the democratic opposition in Portugal and the liberation movements of former Portuguese colonies during the dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar, the Secretary‑General added.

The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, paid tribute to Mr. Bouteflika and his work as a freedom fighter.  During his years as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Algerian diplomacy was a pride of place, he said.  It was a period of richness as Mr. Bouteflika pushed for a reassessment of the global economic system that met the needs of the least developed countries.  He worked to strengthen the sovereignty of peoples.  The twenty‑ninth session was a transitional phase.  For example, Mr. Bouteflika called Mr. Arafat to take the floor of the Assembly podium for the first time and represent the Palestinian people.

Thanking the Secretary‑General, the Assembly President and the regional groups for their condolences, the representative of Algeria said Mr. Bouteflika worked tirelessly to promote the values of the United Nations and played a leading role in building a multilateral system.  Mr. Bouteflika also led a review of the global economic system to encompass the needs of developing countries.  To do so, he unified these countries’ positions through the Charter of Algiers, a reference document that the Group of 77 and China use to this day.  Mr. Bouteflika tirelessly supported a language of dialogue that led to the peaceful resolution of many disputes.

Also delivering tributes were the representatives of Ghana (on behalf of the African Group), Malaysia (on behalf of the Asia‑Pacific Group), Bulgaria (on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States), El Salvador (on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group), Turkey (on behalf of the Western European and Other States Group) and the United States (on behalf of the Host Country).

In other business, the Assembly authorized the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction to convene its second session from 29 November to 3 December 2021, and the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to hold the elections of Bureau members of the Board for 2022 on 6 December 2021.  The authorization was granted on the strict understanding that conference services would be allocated on an “if available” basis from existing resources in such a way as to ensure the work of the Assembly and its Main Committee is not impeded.

The General Assembly will reconvene at 10 a.m., on Wednesday, 20 October, to discuss the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.