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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 14 September 2022 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the candidature of Bangladesh for election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2023–2025, at the elections to be held during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, on 11 October 2022.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission has the further honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, reaffirming its commitment to the protection and promotion of all human rights (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh would be most grateful if the present note and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 118 (c) of the provisional agenda.

* [A/77/150](#).



Annex to the note verbale dated 14 September 2022 from the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Bangladesh to the United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023–2025

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. Bangladesh has presented its candidature for membership to the Human Rights Council for the term 2023–2025.
2. Bangladesh's interest in serving as a member of the Human Rights Council emanates from its commitment to build "a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens", as stipulated in the preamble to the Constitution. The Constitution, the supreme law of the country, serves as the principal source and means for the protection and promotion of the human rights of the more than 164 million people of the country. The fundamental rights that are envisaged in the Constitution reflect many of the human rights prescribed by international human rights law. It guarantees every citizen's fundamental civil and political rights, as well as ensuring the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.
3. A secular democracy, Bangladesh is firmly committed to the principle of a pluralistic society that is built upon genuine and constructive dialogue, and cooperation and mutual respect. Bangladesh considers all human rights as universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Bangladesh's engagement with the human rights mechanism is rooted in its belief that the promotion and protection of human rights are best pursued through dialogue and cooperation. As a responsible member of the international community, Bangladesh actively participates in constructive dialogues with the institutions developed under the aegis of the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms.
4. The Constitutional commitment of the country is complemented by a number of legislative and administrative measures and practical policy interventions, including:
 - An independent judiciary that ensures the right to justice through the delivery of judicial pronouncements and verdicts. The International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh, for example, has created a new era of justice by conducting trials of individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and other international crimes committed during the war of liberation in 1971 and ending a culture of impunity. In order to keep the judiciary operational during the pandemic, Bangladesh was one of the first countries to establish virtual courts. The Supreme Court, the highest court of the land, remains proactive in entertaining public-interest litigation and passing orders to ensure citizens' rights.
 - The strong and vibrant media find expression through the publication of about 544 daily newspapers, 357 weeklies, 62 fortnightlies and 93 monthlies. More than 33 private television channels are in operation, allowing open and free discussion of the Government's policies and actions. In order to help the media to continue their contribution as front-line responders in the midst of the pandemic, the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, allocated an amount of \$1.18 million to enable them to withstand the fallout from the pandemic.

- Civil society organizations/non-governmental organizations, including 3,075 non-governmental organizations registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau are working tirelessly for the promotion and protection of human rights of the people through various advocacy initiatives.
- The Independent National Human Rights Commission contributes with effective intervention where necessary to uphold the human rights of the people.

5. The laws and institutions in the country create an enabling environment and promote a people-centric development model that helps to ensure the enjoyment, promotion and protection of all individuals' human rights. The country has made impressive progress, particularly in the last 13 years, in poverty alleviation and the economic emancipation of its people. The poverty rate declined from 31.5 per cent in 2010 to 20.5 per cent in 2021. The National Social Security Strategy has been instrumental in promoting inclusive development and advancing the principle of leaving no one behind. The Strategy prompted various schemes in its social safety net programmes to include all vulnerable segments of the society, namely, persons with disabilities, widows, older persons, children and infants. In order to keep the economy afloat during the pandemic, the Government announced 28 stimulus packages worth \$15.5 billion. The country's social safety net programmes have been expanded to cover 11 million people. Despite the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)-induced fallback, Bangladesh sustained a gross domestic product growth rate of 6.2 per cent during the period 2020–2021.

6. Being one of the most climate-vulnerable countries, Bangladesh adopted a robust Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2030 and the Delta Plan 2100, created the Bangladesh Climate Vulnerable Trust Fund and is currently in the process of formulating its National Adaptation Plan to address issues related to the rights of the climate-affected people of Bangladesh.

7. Keeping human rights central to its pandemic response strategy, Bangladesh launched a timely and free national vaccination campaign with coverage for all, including the forcibly displaced Rohingya from Myanmar. The Government remained faithful to the conviction that “no one is safe until everyone is safe” and ensured the safety and welfare of the Rohingya population living in the camps. Moreover, to decongest the overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar, the Government developed a new accommodation facility, spending over \$350 million from its own exchequer.

8. Considering education the most important foundation for the development of human society, and the right thereto as a broad but critical enabler of human rights, the Government made a targeted intervention in education that witnessed commendable results in increasing the enrolment rate in schools, achieving gender parity by bringing millions of girls into schools and a higher literacy rate through the training of 327,000 teachers, distributing about 400 million free textbooks, and providing information and communications technology (ICT) devices to 83,000 schools in the country. The Government is implementing the National Master Plan for ICT in Education to facilitate technology-based education for children, including remote learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government introduced the “Ghore Boshe Shikhi” (learning from home) initiative operated through television and radio programmes. Moreover, the faith-based education system has been modernized, and mother tongue-based education is being provided to the children of ethnic minorities.

9. To ensure primary health care and emergency health facilities for all on an equitable basis, the National Health Policy implementation succeeded in reducing maternal and infant mortality, increasing life expectancy at birth, increasing longevity, improving child nutrition, reducing the stunting rate of children under the age of five and achieving universal immunization. Non-governmental organizations

and private organizations are playing a key role in support of the Government. Telemedicine services, satellite clinics and 24/7 health service call centres are ensuring a health service to people at the grass-roots level. As a key component of its health policy, Bangladesh underscored the utmost importance of ensuring access to safe drinking water and has already covered 98.5 per cent of its population. Bangladesh is pledge-bound to ensure access to safe drinking water for all.

10. The Constitution recognizes shelter as a basic necessity. To gradually ensure housing for all people, the “Ashrayan” (accommodation) project of the Government provided houses to more than 500,000 families. More than 1 million families have received houses since 1996.

11. To empower women, the Government increased women’s reserved seats in the national Parliament to 50, earmarked 30 per cent of seats for women in local government bodies and ensured budgeting, special loans, microfinance and similar initiatives for women’s financial inclusion. Some 20 million women are engaged in the agriculture, industry and service sectors. Over 3.5 million women are working in the ready-made garments sector, the largest export earnings source in the country. The Government made a special allocation for women-led small and medium-sized enterprises, introduced special skill projects in all districts and announced interest-free mortgage and loan facilities for women entrepreneurs. Sustainable Development Goal 5 has been fully integrated into its national plans, policies and programmes.

12. To prevent and redress violence against women and children, the Government has framed a robust legal framework through enacting the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, the Human Trafficking (Deterrence and Suppression) Act, the Pornography Control Act, the Children Act, the Child Marriage Restraint Act and the Dowry Prohibition Act, and ensuring their full implementation. The Government established a special tribunal in each district for the expeditious trial of cases of violence against women and children, introduced a 24/7 hotline and set up toll-free hotlines such as 109, 999 and 333 to extend instant support to victims. The Government has also taken steps to amend the Evidence Act to further advance women’s rights and protection.

13. A State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Bangladesh enacted a new Children Act in 2013, repealing its earlier Law of 1974 to bring it into conformity with the Convention and to address new challenges faced by children. Furthermore, to realize all rights of the child, Bangladesh enacted a number of important pieces of legislation, formulated policies and allocated an increased budget to address issues such as health, education, child labour and child marriage. To counter the menace of child marriage, the Government laid a strong legal foundation, including the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the Child Marriage Restraint Rules and the National Action Plan to eliminate child marriage (2018–2030). A new campaign to help advance the 10-year National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage (2018–2030) has also been launched.

14. Embracing the values of inclusion, harmony and peaceful coexistence, Bangladesh attaches particular importance to the socioeconomic development of the ethnic minorities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, maintains a “zero-tolerance” policy for any forms of violence against religious minorities under any pretext and promotes religious diversity and interfaith harmony, advocating the dictum: “Each unto his or her religion, festivals are for all”.

15. On the basis of the underlying philosophy of protecting people’s rights, ensuring accountability and delivering citizen-centric services through technology, the Government adopted the “Digital Bangladesh” initiative, leading to the rapid growth of Internet subscribers in the country, with over 100 million today. Bangladesh considers that the right to information is an inalienable part of the freedom of thought,

conscience and speech. Bangladesh realizes the right to information by implementing the Right to Information Act, which has established the Information Commission. In Bangladesh, access to information has been greatly enhanced through widespread and unhindered Internet outlets.

16. Bangladesh's commitment to fulfil its obligation under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is manifested through the enactment of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, and the inclusion of such persons in the national development plans. The Disability-related Coordinated Special Education Regulation of 2009 has led to the establishment of 62 special schools for children with intellectual disabilities and 11 special schools for children with autism in eight divisional cities in the country. The Government has also put in place strong legislation and programmes to protect people with disabilities and neurodevelopment disorders. This includes support and learning centres across the country and other referral services, including disability inclusive e-services.

17. The Government has taken special initiatives to ensure the rights of disadvantaged groups in society. Recent policies concerning the recognition of hijra people, allocating stipends for them and introducing a special tax rebate for the employers of hijra workers, and their inclusion in mainstream politics are important milestones in this regard. Bangladesh now has hijras working in television media as news presenters, and as mayors. The Government has already drafted the anti-discrimination law which is now undergoing parliamentary scrutiny.

18. In line with its commitment to uphold labour rights and ensure workplace safety, the Government adopted an action-oriented time-bound road map on labour sector reform (2021–2026).

Contributions at the international level

19. Bangladesh firmly believes in multilateralism and underlines that the promotion and protection of human rights are best achieved through an inclusive and cooperative global approach. Bangladesh ratified and continues to implement eight out of nine major human rights conventions and to regularly report to the relevant treaty bodies on the progress in implementing those conventions.

20. Bangladesh attaches high importance to the mandate of the Human Rights Council and cooperates with the Council and its various mechanisms, including the universal periodic review and special procedures, as well as with treaty bodies to uphold its commitments and obligations under the relevant international human rights instruments. In this regard:

- Bangladesh remains closely engaged with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) through interactive discussions, as required, including at the ministerial level. Bangladesh expects a visit by the High Commissioner to Bangladesh soon. Bangladesh also fully cooperates with the Human Rights Adviser appointed by OHCHR in Bangladesh.
- In recognition of the consistent commitment of the Government on human rights issues and the consistent engagement with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, the third universal periodic review of Bangladesh in 2018 saw the participation of 105 states, of which 101 states appreciated, recognized and welcomed Bangladesh's ongoing endeavours to promote and protect human rights. Bangladesh accepted most of the recommendations and is currently implementing those, with support from OHCHR and other relevant stakeholders. Bangladesh also actively participates in the universal periodic review of other States and provides recommendations to promote and protect human rights.

- Bangladesh fully supports and cooperates with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and has welcomed the visits of the Special Rapporteurs. Bangladesh is currently working on the visits of the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.
- Since 2018, Bangladesh has facilitated multiple visits of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. Bangladesh has also facilitated visits of the members of the erstwhile international independent fact-finding mission on Myanmar and investigative teams of OHCHR, among others, to collect information and conduct advocacy for the protection of human rights of the Rohingya minorities. Currently, the Government is facilitating the visit of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. Bangladesh has also remained engaged with the International Criminal Court and the office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, including by facilitating their visit to Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh served as a member of the Working Group on Situations of the Human Rights Council in 2019.

21. Bangladesh is an ardent advocate of global climate change action. As the Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, Bangladesh steered the voice of the climate-vulnerable nations on the international platforms, including the Human Rights Council. Bangladesh is the main sponsor of the annual resolution on human rights and climate change in the Council and contributed to the creation of the role of Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of Human Rights in the context of climate change. Bangladesh's commitment to climate change issues is manifested through its extensive climate actions, including mitigation measures, despite its minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. It was one of the first countries to submit its nationally determined contributions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

22. Bangladesh is the main sponsor of the resolutions on the protection of family, on human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism, on the protection of journalists in situations of armed conflict and on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

23. Bangladesh is currently hosting 1 million Rohingya forcibly displaced by Myanmar and providing them with humanitarian assistance and protection. It remains engaged with other members of the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council, to promote the rights of the Rohingya people, including their right to safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return to Myanmar. Pending repatriation, the Government is providing them with a Myanmar curriculum-based education and has also arranged better accommodation facilities in Bhashan Char at its own cost. Bangladesh remains constructively engaged with the international accountability mechanisms for ensuring justice and accountability for these persecuted people.

24. Bangladesh played an active role during the negotiation and adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, particularly in incorporating the human rights of migrants as a central element of the Compact. As a State party to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Bangladesh actively promotes the rights of migrant workers and their families throughout the entire migration cycle. Bangladesh twice served as a member of the Committee on Migrant Workers.

25. Bangladesh is the leading troop- and police-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations and champions the protection of civilians and the women and peace and security agenda. It makes voluntary contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund. Bangladesh is also the flag-bearer of the norm-setting resolution on the “Culture of peace” in the United Nations. In 1999, Bangladesh took the lead in introducing the normative agenda item entitled “Culture of peace” in the General Assembly and followed up with the flagship resolution entitled “Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace”. Since then, Bangladesh has been facilitating this resolution every year in the General Assembly.

26. In line with its “zero-tolerance” policy for any kind of sexual violence and abuse, Bangladesh has responded positively to the call of the United Nations Secretary-General to end sexual exploitation and abuse.

27. The Government of Bangladesh maintains a “zero-tolerance” approach to terrorism and violent extremism. Bangladesh has partnered with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund to engage with community-based organizations and remains a reliable partner of the United Nations in fighting terrorism and preventing violent extremism globally, regionally and nationally by addressing its root causes in order to strengthen human rights.

28. Bangladesh firmly believes that the ultimate guarantee of security and human rights lies only in the total elimination of nuclear weapons. To this end, it is among the first 50 countries that have ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Voluntary pledges and commitments

29. In announcing its candidacy for the Human Rights Council, Bangladesh makes the following voluntary pledges and commitments.

30. At the domestic level, Bangladesh will:

(a) Take initiatives to enact/amend national laws and develop policies and strategies aimed at the realization of fundamental rights and principles as enshrined in the Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments to which it is a party; at the same time, consider acceding to the remaining international human rights instruments, based on consensus forged through national consultation processes, as appropriate;

(b) Continue to cooperate and engage with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and other United Nations human rights mechanisms to further improve human rights situations;

(c) Further empower and enhance the operational effectiveness of the statutory and watchdog bodies, such as the National Human Rights Commission, the National Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Public Service Commission and the Information Commission in accordance with their mandates through the provision of adequate human and financial resources;

(d) Develop a national action plan for human rights, based on consensus forged through national consultation processes, as appropriate, to set the strategic direction for the promotion and protection of human rights and identify key priorities in accordance with its national and international obligations;

(e) Ensure effective parliamentary oversight, including through the parliamentary standing committees; enhance transparency and accountability in public accounts; and further strive to end corruption in public and private sectors;

(f) Continue its pro-people developmental agenda with particular attention to women, children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable sections of the population, including through the sustained application and innovation of home-grown concepts;

(g) Continue to enhance the multi-stakeholder consultations involving civil society representatives, non-governmental organization representatives, academia and other partners in the process of policy formulation;

(h) Enact the Anti-discriminatory Law;

(i) Amend the Evidence Act;

(j) Continue to promote and protect the rights of religious and ethnic minorities and work towards maintaining the traditional communal harmony by upholding the secular, pluralist and inclusive values of the State and society;

(k) Strengthen efforts to promote and protect workers' rights and progressively realize decent work conditions through the implementation of the action-oriented road map on labour sector reform (2021–2026);

(l) Continue to take adequate social and developmental measures for promoting the education and well-being of women and girls with a view to ending child marriage;

(m) Develop an anti-rape and child protection device to ensure emergency support for the victim;

(n) Take initiatives/actions to raise women's participation in the workforce to 50:50 by 2041, in line with the commitment made at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women;

(o) Take initiatives/actions to ensure gender equality in the ICT sector by 2041, in line with the commitment made at the Generation Equality Forum in Paris;

(p) Continue to work hard towards achieving long-term food security in line with the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2020 and its Plan of Action (2021–2031);

(q) Implement the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2030 focusing on green growth, resilient infrastructure and renewable energy;

(r) Ensure a free space for the media to operate and thrive in and maintain a healthy professional relationship with the press;

(s) Continue to create awareness through media campaigns, seminars and workshops, and introduce human rights education in academic and training institutions, especially for judges, public prosecutors, lawyers, law enforcement agencies, journalists, civil servants, parliamentarians and the media;

(t) Promote the role of women, youth, teachers, local leaders and other stakeholders in society for preventing violent extremism and intolerance to ensure the enjoyment of constitutionally guaranteed fundamental freedoms.

31. At the global level, Bangladesh will:

(a) Extend its full support to the Human Rights Council in its work and continue to contribute to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the working methods of the Council and its various mechanisms;

(b) Further expand cooperation with the human rights treaty bodies, special procedure mandate holders and other mechanisms of the Council through regular communication;

(c) Engage constructively with all parties, on the basis of dialogue and cooperation, to resolve challenges to the full realization of all human rights and to prevent human rights violations throughout the world;

(d) Continue to submit all periodic reports to treaty bodies in compliance with its treaty obligations and constructively engage during the reviews;

(e) Continue to support the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds that can facilitate the promotion of human rights;

(f) Continue to work within the Council to further strengthen the universal periodic review mechanism;

(g) Promote the realization of the right to development as an inalienable right for all and support the ongoing efforts to develop the concept further and its operationalization, based on practical applications;

(h) Continue to pursue the issue of human rights and climate change at the national and international levels, including in the Council, to further enhance the interface between human rights and climate change;

(i) Continue to promote and advocate the human rights of migrant workers across the entire migration cycle;

(j) Continue its commitment to promote and protect rights of older persons, including by engaging in the multilateral process for the adoption of a legally binding instrument in this regard;

(k) Continue its advocacy for a “culture of peace” and collective measures against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and protect the victims against such crimes;

(l) Continue to work with the international community to create awareness about genocide and crimes against humanity, promote collective actions to prevent genocide and similar crimes anywhere and anytime, and support initiatives to ensure justice for the victims of genocide;

(m) Continue to work with the Special Rapporteur and the international accountability mechanisms to promote and protect the human rights of the world’s most persecuted people – the Rohingya;

(n) Continue to promote the women and peace and security agenda and the youth, peace and security agenda at both the global and the national levels.

32. Bangladesh is confident that, with its long-standing deep commitment, close engagement and wealth of experience, it will contribute immensely to the activities of the Human Rights Council. Bangladesh looks forward to the continued support of the international community in its endeavour to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, including through the work of the Council.