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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 29 April 2024 from the Permanent Mission of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations in New York has the honour to refer to the candidature of the Marshall Islands to the Human Rights Council for the term 2025–2027, at the elections to be held in October 2024 in New York.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations has the further honour to transmit herewith the final voluntary pledges and commitments, reaffirming that the promotion and protection of human rights are a priority of the Marshall Islands (see annex).**

The Permanent Mission of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations would be grateful if the present note and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 115 (c) of the preliminary list.

* [A/79/50](#).

** Circulated in the language of submission only.



Annex to the note verbale dated 29 April 2024 from the Permanent Mission of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the Marshall Islands to the Human Rights Council, 2025–2027

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/251](#)

Background

1. The Republic of the Marshall Islands has presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2025–2027, with elections to be held during the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly in New York in October 2024.
2. The Republic of the Marshall Islands, in the north Pacific Ocean, contains a small population spread out over a vast exclusive economic zone of 2 million km². The Marshall Islands is a strong democracy with constitutional affirmation of core human rights. Since its independence in 1986 (and upon becoming a State Member of the United Nations in 1991), the Government of the Marshall Islands has strengthened its protection of basic human rights, and is committed to further efforts. Key challenges include climate change impacts, in particular sea level rise, addressing impacts from nuclear testing during its time under United Nations trusteeship, human rights in the fisheries sector and human trafficking.
3. The Marshall Islands will have an independent voice on the Human Rights Council. It aims to emphasize the important role of small nations as bridge-builders and will pursue a balanced agenda that also strengthens accountability. While many human rights issues are complex, the Marshall Islands considers that it is of utmost importance to listen closely to all perspectives, understand the facts and take an informed and principled position.
4. The Marshall Islands' second term on the Human Rights Council will ensure continual improvement of multilateral progress towards the attainment of universal human rights – its unique national experience provides a sensitivity to the voices of the most vulnerable and a first-hand understanding of complex issues. The Marshall Islands' first term on the Human Rights Council, from 2020 to 2022, resulted in key achievements, including a new Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change and a new resolution seeking technical assistance to address the impact of nuclear testing on human rights in the Marshall Islands.

Key goals of the Marshall Islands in serving on the Human Rights Council

5. The key goals of the Marshall Islands in serving on the Human Rights Council are to:
 - (a) Ensure accountability and active dialogue with responsible actors to address complex and challenging human rights situations by:
 - (i) Improving cooperation on multilateral discussions at the Human Rights Council and the activities of specialized procedures and mandate holders;

- (ii) Boosting visibility, ownership and implementation of Human Rights Council resolutions and outcomes;
- (iii) Listening closely to all Member States and stakeholders in order to make informed contributions to durable solutions;
- (iv) Speaking on critical and emerging specific human rights situations and giving credence to the relevance and the importance of the Human Rights Council as a forum for the promotion and protection of human rights;
- (v) Engaging in dialogue to deepen diplomatic understanding of difficult challenges and amplify the voices of vulnerable communities;
- (vi) Having an independent voice and seeking a balanced agenda. Its recent experience of serving on the Human Rights Council shows how small States have unique strengths and can have an important impact in multilateral progress;
- (b) Improve coherent and effective international reporting by:
 - (i) Working with other Human Rights Council members and stakeholders to help the universal periodic review to better identify and address unique issues and challenges;
 - (ii) Seeking increased communication and coherence between multiple reporting cycles and treaty bodies, and to improve reporting effectiveness, including on devising possible strategies to simplify and cluster reporting to treaty bodies;
 - (iii) Improving reporting on the implementation of treaty body recommendations;
- (c) Strengthen the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the Work of the Human Rights Council and other avenues that boost the voices of the most vulnerable communities and Member States without diplomatic representation in Geneva. The Marshall Islands has benefited from the Trust Fund and is a positive example of the effectiveness of this Trust Fund's work in building closer bridges to vulnerable nations and international human rights engagement. It is now proud to serve as a core group member of the Trust Fund;
- (d) Strengthen climate change implication in human rights and security, in line with the Bore Declaration on Regional Security, in particular by promoting the greater recognition of the transnational impacts of climate change and the extraterritorial human rights obligations that come with it, ensure coherence between the negotiations of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and human rights obligations, and ensure human rights-based approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Domestic human rights record of the Marshall Islands

6. The Marshall Islands considers that human rights and culture are related and can draw strength from each other through their common aspiration to promote and protect shared values in a community. In 2022, the Marshall Islands Country Focal Officer for the Pacific Community Human Rights and Social Development Division, Kathryn Relang, explained that “a common misunderstanding among Marshallese and the Pacific region is that human rights are a foreign concept. But, really, if we look into our cultural practices, bwebwenatos, proverbs, and songs, human rights and responsibilities are conveyed. Human rights come from our values that we want to live by in our societies. It is not a foreign concept”.

7. As a small island developing State, and a relatively new nation, the Marshall Islands is committed to upholding the highest standards of open democracy and fundamental freedom, and to further national progress on core human rights goals, both in treaty participation as well as in its national Constitution. While capacity and economic resources are often scarce, full attainment and protection of human rights is of the highest national priority. Information on the Marshall Islands national human rights record is presented in the attached enclosure.

Intended voluntary pledges and commitments

8. As part of its campaign, the Republic of the Marshall Islands will provide a formal submission of voluntary pledges and commitments to the Secretariat. The highlights of its intended submission are summarized below.

9. At the national level, the Republic of the Marshall Islands will:

(a) Establish a national human rights institution, in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), and work towards “A” status accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions;

(b) Establish a national mechanism for reporting, implementation and follow-up to facilitate periodic reporting to treaty bodies and to seek technical assistance in the development of a mechanism specific to the Marshall Islands and through exploring cooperation and technical assistance from the regional office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Human Rights and Social Development Division of the Pacific Community;

(c) Review laws and national policies in accordance with recommendations received during the universal periodic review process and explore reforms required to address priority issues, particularly areas requiring the greater participation of women, children and persons with disabilities;

(d) Continue efforts to seek meaningful technical assistance and cooperation to address the human rights impacts of its nuclear legacy and build the capacity of the National Nuclear Commission, through constructive dialogue and engagement with the Human Rights Council, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders;

(e) Commit to protect against and prevent discrimination in all forms, both in law and practice, including through consideration of an anti-discrimination legislation in the Nitijela (Parliament), and upscale progress towards policy formulation on both an individual and cross-cutting platform;

(f) Commit to the ongoing constructive relationship shared with civil society in the Marshall Islands built on many years of trust and mutual respect with open dialogue and partnerships, including engaging civil society in the formulation and implementation of domestic human rights policies and programmes;

(g) Prioritize consideration in the Cabinet and the Nitijela (Parliament) of the ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and increase efforts to investigate and prosecute traffickers under the new law and awareness campaigns. The Marshall Islands is a destination for East Asian and Marshallese girls and women subjected to sex trafficking and a transit point for foreign fishermen subjected to labour trafficking, and considers addressing and preventing such human rights violations a priority;

(h) Undertake further policy outcomes on illegal international adoptions, including enhanced enforcement, addressing multi-jurisdictional issues, and consideration in the Cabinet and the Nitijela (Parliament) of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption;

(i) Affirm its commitment to improving prison conditions in accordance with international standards, including completing the construction of a new prison facility that meets these standards.

10. At the international level, the Republic of the Marshall Islands will:

(a) Continue to pledge to uphold the highest standards in the respect for and promotion and protection of human rights, both domestically and abroad;

(b) Undertake Cabinet and parliamentary consideration of the following treaty instruments:

(i) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;

(ii) Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption;

(iii) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;

(c) Continue cooperation with the United Nations special procedures and the further extension of standing invitations to special procedure mandate holders, including all Special Rapporteurs and particularly the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, and to continue responding positively to their communications and follow-up to recommendations;

(d) Continue cooperation with human rights treaty bodies, submission of overdue and upcoming reports and implementation of their recommendations;

(e) Contribute to the discussions and deliberations on the reform of the treaty body system, including seeking cooperative efforts to streamline, simplify and harmonize reporting procedures to facilitate greater adherence to their reporting cycles and improve the treaty bodies' accessibility, efficiency, effectiveness and collaboration;

(f) Enhance cooperation with and support for OHCHR, including attention provided to strengthening the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the Work of the Human Rights Council;

(g) Enhance contribution to international deliberations in international human rights forums, including the continued co-sponsorship of Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions on human rights defenders, civil society space and reprisals; committing to supporting the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; joining of pledges to strengthen Human Rights Council membership and standards; statements and joint statements applying objective, rights-based criteria in addressing situations of concern; and constructively engaging with the Human Rights Council generally, its subsidiary bodies and special procedures;

(h) Strengthen the universal periodic review process, including reporting on measures to follow up on recommendations, as well as creative dialogue and effort needed to build stronger bridges between the universal periodic review and pressing human rights challenges in local communities;

(i) Commit to strengthening meaningful engagement of non-governmental organizations and civil society with the Council, including enhanced informal dialogue;

(j) Strengthen the work developed with the OHCHR regional office in Fiji, particularly around the development of the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility of the Pacific Islands Forum, and work taken up under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, notably around loss and damages and the global stocktake;

(k) Leverage the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Economic and Social Council on displacement and cultural rights especially in the context of loss and damages and the impact of sea level rise on statehood and people.

Enclosure

Republic of the Marshall Islands national human rights record

1. In summary, the Marshall Islands:

(a) Has acceded to or ratified eight core human rights instruments and optional protocols, and now has among the highest rates of participation in the Pacific islands region and is on track for further ratifications;

(b) Has an independent and impartial judiciary, recognized as a regional leader in performance and reform;

(c) Has established both a national human rights committee and a national nuclear commission, and is seeking to strengthen them, including with assistance from the United Nations system under a Human Rights Council resolution technical assistance mandate;

(d) Has strong constitutional protections through a bill of rights that ensures, among other protections, freedom of speech, religion and assembly, an independent media, rights to education, health and ethical government, fair trial and due process, and prevention of discrimination;

(e) Recent legislation and policy reforms have addressed or are under way to address vital issues in disabilities, health, gender (including gender-based violence) and anti-discrimination. As a developing nation, the resources and capacity of the Marshall Islands are often limited and produce implementation challenges, yet full attainment of human rights is a ceaseless and critical goal of the highest priority.

2. The Marshall Islands faces particularly unique and difficult challenges that adversely impact human rights, including in relation to climate change impacts, nuclear weapons testing impacts, human trafficking and human rights violations in the fisheries sector. Active efforts are under way to further address these challenges.
