



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-ninth session

Item 115 (c) of the preliminary list\*

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

### **Note verbale dated 31 May 2024 from the Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the candidacy of Iceland for the Human Rights Council for the term 2025–2027 at the elections to be held during the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of Iceland has the further honour to transmit herewith a document in which it has set out the voluntary pledges and commitments made by Iceland in reaffirming its commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Iceland would be grateful if the present note and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 115 (c) of the preliminary list.

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



**Annex to the note verbale dated 31 May 2024 from the Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

**Candidature of Iceland to the Human Rights Council for the term 2025–2027**

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

1. Iceland's candidature for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the term 2025–2027 reflects its firm commitment to promoting and protecting human rights for everyone, everywhere and at all times. Given the unique status of the Human Rights Council as the preeminent multilateral forum dedicated to the advancement of human rights, Iceland attaches great importance to the Council's mandate and engages actively and constructively in its work.
2. Iceland fully accepts the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and key human rights treaties. No one should be denied human rights on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity. Iceland also recognizes that the three pillars of the United Nations – peace and security, sustainable development and human rights – are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.
3. Respecting and protecting human rights and fulfilling human rights obligations are crucial commitments that Iceland takes seriously. Human rights are ensured by the Constitution of Iceland and reflected in national legislation. The Government of Iceland pursues an inclusive approach to the promotion and protection of human rights, including through consultations and cooperation across Government, with the public and private sectors and with civil society organizations and youth representatives.
4. This inclusive approach has been well reflected in Iceland's human rights treaty body reviews and the universal periodic review, as well as during its membership on the Human Rights Council in 2018–2019. If re-elected, Iceland's membership on the Council will be guided by the same approach.
5. Iceland has ratified seven core United Nations human rights treaties and recognizes the competence of respective human rights treaty bodies to review the human rights situation in Iceland. Iceland is also a party to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights), as well as several other regional human rights treaties, and is subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.
6. In 2018, Iceland ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) and, in 2019, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Iceland also acceded to the United Nations conventions on statelessness in 2021.
7. Human rights are a key pillar of Iceland's foreign policy. Iceland actively participates in multilateral forums, including the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to promote and protect human rights and address human rights violations and abuses.
8. Human rights are, likewise, an essential pillar of Iceland's international development partnerships, as reflected in Iceland's policy for international

development cooperation for 2024–2028, which is guided by a human rights-based approach.

9. Iceland has played an active role in enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies. Since 2016, Iceland has led the core group on the resolution addressing the human rights treaty body system at the General Assembly.

10. Iceland supports the independence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as its unique and indispensable mandate. Reflecting this, Iceland has more than doubled its multi-year core contribution to OHCHR for the period 2024–2028.

11. Iceland would be honoured to serve as a member of the Human Rights Council. As a member, Iceland would do its utmost to meet the highest standards of human rights domestically, as well as to promote and protect human rights worldwide.

12. In this spirit, Iceland presents the commitments and pledges below, which are centred around six main themes.

### **Advancing the human rights of all through constructive dialogue and engagement**

13. With regard to advancing the human rights of all through constructive dialogue and engagement, Iceland will:

(a) Focus on strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights, nationally and internationally, guided by the fundamental principles of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings;

(b) Engage in open and constructive dialogue with all members of the Human Rights Council, recognizing that the Council draws strength from its diversity;

(c) Stand up for those whose rights are under threat or violated, whether by infringement, discrimination or deprivation, and encourage all United Nations Member States to fulfil their human rights obligations;

(d) Promote the engagement of and collaboration with civil society, human rights defenders, youth and other stakeholders in the work of the Human Rights Council and, likewise, emphasize the importance of protection against reprisals;

(e) Support the work and rights of human rights defenders and pledges to promote and protect freedoms of opinion and expression and peaceful assembly and association, as well as the freedom of the media and the safety of journalists;

(f) Work to enhance the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to enjoy life free from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, as well as the importance of living independently;

(g) Work to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Human Rights Council to enable it to fulfil its mandate of promoting and protecting the enjoyment and full realization of human rights for all;

(h) Continue its full support of the universal periodic review process, including by making specific and implementable recommendations in all universal periodic review sessions;

(i) Support universal participation in the universal periodic review through predictable contributions to the Voluntary Fund for Participation in the Universal Periodic Review and the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review;

(j) Promote, protect and respect the independence of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and OHCHR and actively advocate for predictable and substantive voluntary contributions to the Office;

(k) Support meaningful coordination and mainstreaming of human rights across the United Nations system and cooperate fully with the special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies and protect and promote their independence.

#### **Accelerating progress on the human rights of women and girls**

14. With regard to accelerating progress on the human rights of women and girls, Iceland will:

(a) Remain steadfast in its commitment to advancing human rights of women and girls, recognizing the structural inequalities and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination women and girls face;

(b) Work collaboratively across all regions and fora towards zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment;

(c) Continue to work towards achieving equal pay for work of equal value and equality in the labour market, both nationally and internationally;

(d) Continue to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education;

(e) Promote the engagement of men and boys to advance gender equality for the benefit of all;

(f) Be a strong proponent of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, based on an updated national action plan to be adopted in 2024.

#### **Upholding the rights of children**

15. With regard to upholding the rights of children, Iceland will:

(a) Actively promote the rights of children, guided by the fundamental principle that every child has the right to grow and prosper to adulthood, in education, health, peace and dignity;

(b) Advocate for placing the rights of children at the centre of all policymaking and will contribute to securing the realization of their rights worldwide;

(c) Advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence against children, in particular the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as of harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage;

(d) Promote a child-friendly, interdisciplinary and multi-agency approach to service systems for children who have been exposed to traumatic experiences, to ensure appropriate support;

(e) Advocate for the active and meaningful participation of children in policymaking and decision-making processes.

#### **Fighting discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons**

16. With regard to fighting discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons, Iceland will:

(a) Continue to advocate for, promote and advance the human rights of LGBTIQ+ persons;

(b) Work to address the increased discrimination, violence and hatred faced by LGBTQI+ persons worldwide;

(c) Support the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as the United Nations Free and Equal campaign;

(d) Contribute to the work of international coalitions focused on advancing the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

### **Addressing the linkages between human rights and the environment**

17. With regard to addressing the linkages between human rights and the environment, Iceland will:

(a) Remain steadfast in its support for collective and concrete actions in response to the negative effects that climate change and environmental degradation can have on the enjoyment of human rights worldwide;

(b) Contribute to the international discourse on the link between the environment and human rights.

### **Advancing human rights in Iceland**

18. With regard to advancing human rights at the national level, Iceland will:

(a) Uphold the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights in its national policies and interventions;

(b) Continuously work towards ensuring that national laws and policies comply with international human rights standards as new challenges to human rights continue to arise;

(c) Establish a strong, independent and effective national human rights institution in full accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles);

(d) Continue to mainstream human rights across the Government, including through the interministerial steering committee established in 2017, which serves as the national mechanism for reporting and following up on international and regional human rights reviews and engagements;

(e) Enhance dialogue with civil society organizations on human rights issues and challenges by engaging in open consultations on proposed legislation and the preparation of submissions to the human rights treaty bodies;

(f) Continue to actively participate in the universal periodic review process, to respond to recommendations received and to issue a midterm report by the end of 2025;

(g) Continue to extend a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council and to react within the specified time limit to urgent appeals and communications;

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

(i) Directly incorporate the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into Icelandic law;

(j) Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure;

(k) Continue to integrate human rights education as a cross-curricular part of school culture and working methods across all education levels, in accordance with the national curriculum guide;

(l) Remain firmly committed to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and continue to participate in the voluntary national review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals;

(m) Continue to be guided by a human rights-based approach in its development cooperation, focusing in particular on advancing the human rights of women and girls and fighting any discrimination and violence they may face.

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