



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-fourth session

Item 116 (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 9 May 2019 from the Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and has the honour to refer to the candidacy of the Republic of Poland to the Human Rights Council for the term 2020–2022, at the elections to be held in New York in 2019.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations has the further honour to transmit the voluntary pledges and commitments reaffirming that the promotion and protection of human rights is a priority of the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland would be grateful if the present note could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

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\* [A/74/50](#).



## **Annex to the note verbale dated 9 May 2019 from the Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

### **Candidature of Poland to the Human Rights Council, 2020–2022**

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

#### **Introduction**

1. Presenting its candidacy to the Human Rights Council, the Republic of Poland confirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international level. Respect for and observance of human rights is a guiding principle for the Government of the Republic of Poland.
2. Effective protection and promotion of human rights is not possible without international cooperation, both regional and global. The United Nations, and the Human Rights Council in particular, are the crucial and the most appropriate forums in this regard.
3. Human rights are one of three main pillars of the United Nations system. There is an inextricable link between human rights, global security and sustainable development. As a member of the Security Council (2018–2019), Poland recognizes the key role of the Human Rights Council in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and its contribution to international peace, security and development.
4. Poland is a party to the majority of the core human rights instruments, particularly the United Nations conventions and their optional protocols.<sup>1</sup> Recently, a number of other important universal and regional and treaties have been signed or ratified.<sup>2</sup> Poland is also a party to nearly 90 International Labour Organization conventions on various aspects of protecting human and workers' rights and

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<sup>1</sup> International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1977); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1977); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981); Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1989); Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012); Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1991); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2003); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2005); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2005); Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2006).

<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210, 2015); Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201, 2015); International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2013); Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty of 15 December 1989 (2014); Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (2015); Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs (2015).

constantly cooperates with their monitoring bodies in order to implement the recommendations received.

5. Poland recognizes the competence of the treaty bodies – the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – to receive and examine individual complaints about alleged violations of the respective conventions.

6. Poland declares that it complies with the provisions of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) and will continue to cooperate with the European Court of Human Rights in order to implement its sentences.

7. Poland was one of the first countries in the region to establish a national human rights institution according to the Paris Principles. Since 1987 the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) has safeguarded human and civil freedoms and rights and intervenes whenever the law or the principles of social coexistence and justice are violated. The Ombudsman's activity is complemented by that of the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child.

8. The universal periodic review is currently the sole mechanism that allows for efficient monitoring and assessing the human rights review of all United Nations Member States. Poland will strive to maintain the integrity and universality of the universal periodic review by respecting the principle of equal treatment, cooperation between the Member States, and ensuring the extensive involvement of civil society. National human rights mechanisms play a major role in this process.

9. Poland is convinced that the Human Rights Council needs some important reforms. Appropriate actions based on consensus have to be undertaken to ensure that human rights are effectively protected, respected and promoted worldwide. The representativeness of the Human Rights Council should be strengthened and the United Nations Member States which have not been members of this body so far should be more involved. In 2018, Poland joined 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.

10. The Human Rights Council has underlined on numerous occasions the link between the negative impacts of climate change and human rights. Poland has been involved in the global climate negotiations for a long time. In December 2018, we hosted for the third time the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24) in Katowice (earlier: COP 14 in 2008 in Poznań and COP 19 in 2013 in Warsaw).

To achieve the above-mentioned goals, Poland presents the following voluntary pledges and commitments:

#### **I. Human rights as an indispensable element to achieve peace, security and development**

1. Poland believes that the universal, indivisible and interrelated nature of human rights should be actively promoted at all levels of international dialogue, both globally and regionally.

2. Consistent strengthening of the role of international law and human rights as key conditions for maintaining international peace and security is one of Poland's objectives in the Security Council (2018–2019).

3. It is commonly recognized that human rights are essential to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions: social, economic and

environmental. Human rights principles and standards are distinctly reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda with all its Sustainable Development Goals is of the utmost importance to Poland.

## **II. Human Rights Council – the main global body responsible for protecting, respecting and promoting human rights**

1. Poland has voluntarily participated in the three cycles of the universal periodic review to date (most recently in May 2017), making comprehensive efforts to implement the majority of recommendations received.
2. Poland has extended and maintains a standing invitation to all United Nations human rights special procedures. Since 2001 Poland has received all visits of the special procedures and fully cooperated with the international human rights mechanisms.
3. Poland will continue to participate in various activities of the Human Rights Council, in particular in debates on children rights, promoting good governance and the rights of religious minorities.
4. Poland recognizes the need for continued strengthening of the Council's independence, credibility and capacity in order to promptly respond to human rights violations around the world. These objectives could be achieved through better transparency of the Council's work, opposing attempts at procedural decision blocking (non-action motion), broader interregional cooperation and full cooperation with the special procedures.
5. Poland will continue its voluntary contributions to the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for strengthening the Office and for the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.
6. We recognize the need for all United Nations Member States to take part in the Council's work. In 2018, Poland joined 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. We have also pledged to provide financial contributions to the fund in the coming years.

## **III. Support for the promotion of human rights around the world**

1. Poland pledges further financial support for the international humanitarian institutions in their work to strengthen the role of humanitarian law by contributing to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme (UNAIDS) Programme.
2. Poland is particularly involved in promoting good governance. We will continue to submit the biannual resolution at the Human Rights Council on the role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights.
3. Poland pledges to protect human rights defenders against any reprisals and to advocate for their rights by supporting United Nations and European Union campaigns and through its own initiatives.

## **IV. Protection of the rights of vulnerable social groups**

1. Poland will promote the national programmes and good practices with respect to children's education, malnutrition reduction and poverty eradication.

2. Poland has initiated and been actively involved in drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, inspired by the legacy of Dr. Janusz Korczak, dating back to World War II. We will actively work for the full implementation of the rights of the child, including the social reintegration and rehabilitation of children in armed conflicts (both victims and those forced to fight).

3. Poland will enhance efforts for the protection of freedom of religion and belief. We will promote the rights of people belonging to religious minorities and support United Nations initiatives and campaigns in this regard.

4. Poland will strive to eliminate gaps in the protection of persons with disabilities. Within the United Nations system, we are particularly engaged in the protection of persons with Down's syndrome and autism. In 2012, Poland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

#### **V. Strengthening of national human rights protection system**

1. Enhancing its policies that address vulnerable social groups, Poland commits to continuing and expanding the following national programmes: the Family 500+ Programme (a monthly financial benefit of PLN 500 for each child up to the age of 18), the Good Start Programme (a one-off benefit of PLN 300 for all children starting school, regardless of family income), the Toddler+ Programme (a programme which supports the development of childcare institutions for children under the age of 3: kindergartens, children's clubs and daytime carers), the Big Family Card Programme (system of discounts and reductions for families of three or more in public and private institutions), the Mama 4+ Programme (benefits for parents of four or more children who did not acquire the right to the minimum retirement pension), the Senior+ Programme (promotes the activity of seniors in social life and the expansion of support centre infrastructure in local communities).

2. Poland pledges to effectively implement the National Action Plan to Implement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights 2017–2020. As human rights in business has become an important element of foreign policy, the Polish Government has prepared “A Catalogue of Good Practices in Business and Human Rights” and has instructed Polish diplomatic and consular institutions abroad to follow it in their daily operations.

3. Poland pledges to fulfil the National Action Plan to Implement the United Nations Agenda on Women, Peace and Security 2018–2021, based on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and related instruments. The main principles of the Plan involve the need to increase women's participation in peace processes (including peacekeeping missions and operations) and the need to protect and support women and children in conflict and in post-conflict settings.