



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-sixth session

Item 118 (d) 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 23 June 2021 from the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the decision of the Government of the United Arab Emirates to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2022–2024 at the elections to be held during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, in 2021.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates has the further honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments reaffirming that the promotion and protection of human rights are a priority of the foreign policy of the United Arab Emirates for its candidature to the Human Rights Council (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates 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 agenda item 118 (d).

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\* [A/76/50](#).



**Annex to the note verbale dated 23 June 2021 from the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

**Candidature of the United Arab Emirates to the Human Rights Council, 2022–2024**

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

**I. Realization of human rights nationally and voluntary pledges and commitments**

1. The United Arab Emirates is committed to promoting and protecting human rights at the national level. The United Arab Emirates continuously seeks to improve and develop its record in this field by working diligently to enshrine its deep commitment to promoting and respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. In addition, the United Arab Emirates strives to achieve equality and social justice through continued efforts to build the rule of law, foster the principles of good governance and develop its institutional structures in line with its priorities and aspirations and taking into account international standards.

*Human rights legal and institutional framework*

2. Over the past five years, the United Arab Emirates has passed legislation, in line with relevant international conventions and standards, to fulfil the needs and requirements of society. These legislative acts include:

- Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 concerning child rights, known as “Wadeema’s Law”
- Federal Decree Law No. 8 of 2016 on accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- Federal Law No. 5 of 2017 on the use of remote communication technology in criminal proceedings
- Federal Law No. 10 of 2017 on domestic workers
- Federal Decree Law No. 19 of 2019 on insolvency
- Federal Decree Law No. 10 of 2019 on protection from domestic violence
- Federal Law No. 14 of 2020 on the protection of witnesses

3. The United Arab Emirates has made significant amendments to a number of its laws and regulations, including the penal code, labour law, civil transactions law, personal status law and criminal proceedings. These amendments have contributed to realizing human rights. The most important part of these new amendments is the obligation for law enforcement officers to provide an interpreter while cross-examining the accused person, witness or expert. Other important provisions have also been reformed. For example, the consumption of alcohol is no longer criminalized, and additional legal protections have been granted to minors under the age of 21. The amendments also allow non-nationals to adjudicate family and inheritance matters using more applicable laws.

*National strategies and policies*

4. Over the past five years, the United Arab Emirates has issued a series of national policies and strategies to promote and protect human rights, including:

- The National Strategy for the Empowerment of Emirati Women 2015–2021, which provides a general reference and guideline framework for federal and local government, private sector institutions and civil society organizations to develop women’s empowerment plans and programmes.
- The National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood 2017–2021, on the promotion and protection of children’s rights.
- The National Policy for Senior Citizens, launched in October 2018 to improve the quality of life of seniors.
- The Family Protection Policy, adopted in 2019 to strengthen a social system that protects family members and preserves their rights in order to enhance the role of the family and its active participation in community development.
- The National Policy to Empower Persons with Disabilities (People of Determination), which aims to empower them to actively participate in an integrated society and have equal opportunities, and which guarantees a decent life for them and their families.
- The National Immunization Program, adopted by the cabinet of the United Arab Emirates in September 2020 to develop the health system, protect United Arab Emirates society and monitor trends in communicable diseases.

*Realization of human rights at the national level*

5. The United Arab Emirates continues to strengthen and develop its national efforts to implement previous commitments in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural rights, in addition to strengthening its legislative and legal system, thereby contributing to improving and promoting those rights. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates is preparing a national human rights plan under the supervision of the National Human Rights Committee of the United Arab Emirates.

6. The United Arab Emirates emphasizes its support for the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993 and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of 2001. The United Arab Emirates expresses its firm rejection of all forms of racial discrimination, which is criminalized under the penal code of 1987, as amended. Federal Decree Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred, as amended in 2019, also prohibits discrimination based on gender in line with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Convention stresses the need to penalize and criminalize acts associated with all forms of discrimination, as well as rejecting hate speech. The United Arab Emirates also affirms its continued support for international efforts to uphold protections against racism and provide effective and adequate remedies.

7. In the field of promoting women’s rights, the United Arab Emirates pursues an effective national policy, which has allowed women to make a quantum leap in education. In particular, 71.6 per cent of all students enrolled in public universities and 50.1 per cent of students in private universities and institutes are women, which can be considered among the highest rates in the world. Women also actively participate in the economic growth of the United Arab Emirates, where they make up 43 per cent of the private sector workforce and 66 per cent of the government sector. Of those jobs, 30 per cent of those jobs are senior, decision-making leadership positions, and 15 per cent are technical positions. In accordance with article 11 of the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the United Arab Emirates issued Federal Law No. 6, which came into effect in September 2020, guaranteeing equal pay for women in the private sector, where they receive wages equal to males if they perform the same work, or other work of equal value. In terms of political participation, the representation of Emirati women in the Federal National Council has risen to 50 per cent since the legislative elections held in October 2019.

8. The General Women's Union and the Gender Balance Council play a vital role in assisting in overcoming the difficulties that prevent the empowerment of women. Their dedicated efforts are focused on enshrining the complementary roles of men and women, expanding women's meaningful and equal participation in various fields and increasing their representation in leadership and decision-making positions. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates is committed to continuing to implement and update its National Strategy for the Empowerment of Emirati Women 2015–2021 and its executive plan. The United Arab Emirates will also continue implementing the current cooperation and partnership programmes between the United Arab Emirates and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) concerning women's empowerment through the UN-Women liaison office in Abu Dhabi.

9. Quality childcare is another area of concern to the United Arab Emirates, and the United Arab Emirates is fully committed to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has established a number of national bodies to this end, most notably the Children's Advisory Council and the Emirati Children's Parliament in 2019. To tackle future challenges that children will face, the United Arab Emirates has developed interactive digital platforms that help children to acquire skills through games and virtual reality technology and provide them with a knowledge environment to participate in the community. In addition, values and positive behaviours are inculcated through such platforms to protect children from online threats and teach them how to explore social media and websites safely. Internationally, the United Arab Emirates chaired the Virtual Global Taskforce meetings on the protection of children from online abuse and exploitation, held between 2015 and 2018. The United Arab Emirates has secured two permanent seats on the advisory board of the WeProtect initiative. To continue such efforts, the United Arab Emirates has acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography of 2016. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates is currently considering accession to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. The United Arab Emirates is committed to continuing its efforts to protect children's rights and to activate the joint memorandums of understanding between the United Arab Emirates and the United Nations Children's Fund in building national capacity to serve and empower children.

10. In 2017, the United Arab Emirates launched the National Policy to Empower Persons with Disabilities (People of Determination) to provide all services in order to ensure their integration into society and guarantee a decent life for them and their families. The cabinet of the United Arab Emirates, through resolution 43 of 2018, has adopted a policy for supporting the employment of persons with disabilities ("people of determination") to ensure that their rights are protected at various stages of employment. It also ensures that children and their families benefit at an early age from the use of modern, sophisticated tools that enable persons with disabilities ("people of determination") to communicate and to use computers, smart devices and all kinds of applications. In this context,

- The United Arab Emirates is committed to efforts that integrate persons with disabilities (“people of determination”) into the labour market, pursuant to the integrated employment initiative and to creating suitable conditions for them.

11. With regard to the promotion of contract employment rights, the United Arab Emirates continues its legislative and legal efforts to ensure maximum protection. The employer is required to provide appropriate and safe working conditions, including pay equity, rest periods, paid leave, fair recruitment policies and adequate housing, in addition to refraining from seizing workers passports and ensuring the development of a recruitment policy. Federal Law No. 10 of 2017, on domestic workers, was enacted to strengthen such measures and to transparently balance and regulate contractual working relations in order to preserve the rights of all parties in line with national legislation and International Labour Organization standards. The United Arab Emirates has also developed integrated electronic monitoring systems, including the smart inspection system, the labour accommodation system, the smart orientation system, labour housing initiatives, the My Salary service, and a hotline to receive job complaints in all languages. The United Arab Emirates has also updated its electronic labour disputes system and launched service centres at the federal level. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates is considering an amendment to the Labour Law of 1980 to meet current needs and requirements. To promote these rights, the United Arab Emirates pledges to continue fostering the current technical cooperation and partnership between the United Arab Emirates and the International Labour Organization on labour rights.

12. With regard to combating trafficking in persons, the United Arab Emirates has adopted a strategy that meets the best international standards. The strategy comprises five pillars: prevention, prosecution, punishment, protection of victims and promotion of international cooperation. The United Arab Emirates has also launched several initiatives to define how law enforcement officers should deal with victims. Assistance programmes have been expanded, orientation and rehabilitation programmes are provided, and those responsible for trafficking in persons are punished. As part of its support for international efforts to combat human trafficking, the United Arab Emirates has donated \$4 million to support the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking to strengthen efforts to prevent human trafficking crimes and raise awareness to combat these crimes internationally. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates pledges to continue strengthening its legislative system and relevant institutional structures, to support human trafficking victims, to work within the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking as a founding member and to support the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

13. The United Arab Emirates takes pride in its policies that spread the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence and that expand cultural and interfaith dialogue within the country. The Government of the United Arab Emirates has facilitated the establishment of places of worship for many religions and sects and granted them free land plots to build houses of worship. The United Arab Emirates has so far hosted 83 places of worship for non-Muslims to practice their faiths. The United Arab Emirates established the Ministry of Tolerance in February 2016, adopted the National Tolerance Program in June 2016 and declared 2019 the Year of Tolerance, in addition to establishing the International Institute for Tolerance to promote a culture of openness and civilized dialogue. The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Tolerance Award was launched to honour groups and entities that have made outstanding contributions to fostering the values of tolerance nationally and internationally. The United Arab Emirates also announced the establishment of the Abrahamic Family House project in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab

Emirates. This site will feature a mosque, a church and a synagogue that will form a common community where dialogue and the sharing of ideas between followers of the Abrahamic religions are strengthened. Among the most recent prominent events of this policy is the historic visit of His Holiness Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church, to Abu Dhabi in early February 2019. The visit culminated in the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together by His Holiness the Pope and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif. As the result of an initiative by the United Arab Emirates in cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Arab Republic of Egypt, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution in December 2020 declaring 4 February of each year as the International Day of Human Fraternity. The United Arab Emirates has also issued Federal Decree Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred. The law aims to enrich the culture of global tolerance and confront manifestations of discrimination and racism based on ethnic, religious or cultural background. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates will continue its leading role in promoting human relations and eternal religious values within the framework of the United Nations. The United Arab Emirates is currently considering a law on organizing places of worship in the United Arab Emirates that will contribute to promoting religious freedom.

14. The fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been a major challenge. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the United Arab Emirates has dedicated its efforts to prioritizing people at the centre of response efforts. The United Arab Emirates has taken various measures to protect society from the spread of the pandemic, including both nationals and foreign residents of the United Arab Emirates within its territory, without discrimination. The United Arab Emirates has adopted a number of national policies, strategies and plans to confront the pandemic, including health, education, and food security. In this context, the United Arab Emirates has launched a national campaign to provide the vaccine to United Arab Emirates nationals and residents. More than 14 million free doses of the vaccine have been given to date. The United Arab Emirates has spared no effort to provide all forms of support and assistance to other countries affected by the pandemic. The United Arab Emirates has recently launched the Coalition of Hope in support of the global efforts to distribute COVID-19 vaccines worldwide. In this context, the United Arab Emirates has been keen to inform regional and international mechanisms, agencies and specialized organizations such as the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of its efforts to contain the pandemic. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates will continue its efforts to strengthen the national campaign to provide free vaccines to United Arab Emirates nationals and residents. The United Arab Emirates will continue its commitments to provide humanitarian and medical assistance to countries affected by the pandemic.

## **II. Cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms, voluntary pledges and commitments**

15. The United Arab Emirates appreciates the significant efforts of the Human Rights Council as an intergovernmental body and a key body of the United Nations to promote and protect human rights around the world in accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#). The interest of the United Arab Emirates in presenting its candidature to the Human Rights Council is deeply rooted in the need to uphold the values of dialogue, to seek constructive cooperation and to achieve consensus

solutions in order to bridge differences. The United Arab Emirates will do its utmost to contribute, alongside other members, to the Council's activities, as demonstrated during its previous membership when, in 2016 and 2017, the United Arab Emirates submitted a resolution on the right of girls to education, which highlighted education as one of the major challenges facing girls worldwide. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates pledges to resubmit this draft for discussion and enrichment to the Human Rights Council for further enrichment of its partnership with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

16. With regard to cooperation with the Human Rights Council mechanism, the United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to the work of the Human Rights Council mechanisms by submitting its periodic reports to various treaty bodies and pursuing the implementation of its recommendations. The United Arab Emirates also supports the vital role of the special procedures and reiterates its eagerness to continue to cooperate with them, as it has done in the past by hosting a number of special rapporteurs. In this regard:

- The Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities have been invited for a field visit to the United Arab Emirates since 2019.
- The United Arab Emirates and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights are considering the establishment of a technical cooperation programme to build national capacity in the field of human rights.

17. The universal periodic review is an opportunity for the United Arab Emirates to present to its counterparts the progress made in the field of human rights, as well as to share experiences and best practices among countries in various areas of human rights. In this context, the United Arab Emirates has spared no effort to continue implementing all the recommendations agreed to during its third universal periodic review report in 2018, in particular the recommendation to establish the Independent National Human Rights Commission in accordance with the Paris Principles, bearing in mind that, in December 2020, the cabinet of the United Arab Emirates had adopted a decision approving its establishment, providing that the issuance of the Commission's law will be completed in the near future.

- The United Arab Emirates is considering the implementation of a number of recommendations that have been stated during the last universal periodic review session in 2018, the most important of which is to withdraw some reservations on both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

18. With regard to cooperation with regional mechanisms, the United Arab Emirates is committed to reviewing its report by the Arab Commission for Human Rights and engaging in a constructive dialogue with the members to contribute to the promotion of human rights. In practice, this is carried out through the implementation and integration of the articles of the Arab Charter on Human Rights, as well as through national legislation by implementing the recommendations of the reviewed national reports. Moreover, the United Arab Emirates contributes effectively to the work of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation by following up on the implementation of its recommendations in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard:

- The United Arab Emirates pledges to continue cooperating and engaging with all regional mechanisms, in addition to supporting and developing its principles through realizing rights and freedoms.

19. The realization of the Sustainable Development Goals constitutes another area in which the United Arab Emirates continues its strenuous efforts to achieve the Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development at the national level, based on its determination to lay down the foundation of a bright future for all and its commitment to not leave anyone behind. To ensure that the Goals are achieved, the National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals was formed in 2017 to lead the efforts to promote the Goals. In 2018, the United Arab Emirates was among the first countries to submit its voluntary national review report to the New York review committee, pursuant to paragraph 79 of the 2030 Agenda at the high-level political forum on sustainable development held in New York on 16 June 2018.

### **III. Cooperation and international solidarity**

20. Development assistance is considered a priority area in the foreign policy of the United Arab Emirates, with foreign aid for developing countries around the world exceeding \$6.83 billion for 2019. More than 75 per cent of the total amount is spent to support peace, justice, economic growth and poverty eradication initiatives. As part of the commitment of the United Arab Emirates to supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate global poverty, the United Arab Emirates provided \$614 million in foreign aid payments to developing countries between 2016 and 2019. In total, the United Arab Emirates has contributed \$23.8 billion in foreign aid to benefit developing countries. As a result, for the sixth year in a row, the foreign aid of the United Arab Emirates has exceeded the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product approved by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The assistance contribution of the United Arab Emirates of 0.93 per cent is the largest such contribution on a percentage basis in the world, which makes the United Arab Emirates among the top donors. The United Arab Emirates pledges to continue to provide development assistance to developing countries, thereby contributing to strengthening development projects and alleviating suffering in those countries.

21. At the United Nations, the United Arab Emirates makes significant discretionary contributions. The most recent of these was the announcement of a voluntary donation of \$1.5 million to support the programmes and activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In 2018, the United Arab Emirates undertook the renovation of conference room XVII of the Palais des Nations at the United Nations Office at Geneva, worth \$22 million. Finally, the United Arab Emirates announced, in February 2020, a donation of \$589,425 to support an anti-corruption and human rights project initiated by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.