



## **CANDIDATURE OF FINLAND TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL FOR THE TERM 2022 – 2024**

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

Finland is proud to present its candidacy to a seat on the Human Rights Council for the 2022 – 2024 term. Previously Finland served as a member of the Human Rights Council for a period of one year starting in 2006 when the Council was newly established.

Finnish democracy is based on the rule of law, with the Constitution giving every individual strong protection for human dignity, personal integrity, and human rights. Trust and mutual respect between people, as well as the institutions that maintain these rights and values, are key elements of wellbeing in Finland.

Finland underscores the importance of the rules-based international system, its obligations, and the universal and binding nature of human rights. Finland underlines the importance and interdependence of the three pillars of the UN: peace and security, development, and human rights as mutually reinforcing elements. Finland takes a proactive and constructive approach to strengthen multilateral cooperation.

Finland is firmly committed to the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelatedness of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other key covenants adopted, particularly the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Finland has based its own foreign and security policy, including its international development cooperation, on human rights norms and principles.

Finland is a party to seven UN core human rights treaties and recognizes the competence of each treaty body to consider human rights complaints against Finland. As a member state of the Council of Europe, Finland is also a party to several regional human rights treaties and is subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. All governments are accountable under the international human rights law.

We recognize the inherent dignity of every person and everyone's right to full enjoyment of all human rights without discrimination. Advancing gender equality and promoting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights of all women and girls are long-standing priorities of Finland, both at home and internationally. Finland emphasizes that the rights of persons belonging to minorities or in vulnerable situations need to be fully protected. Finland respects and promotes the realisation of indigenous peoples' rights, including the rights of Sámi people living in Finland and the neighbouring countries.

The role of and collaboration with civil society is an integral element of the promotion and protection of human rights both nationally and internationally. The National Human Rights Institution of Finland and non-governmental organizations play a vital part in our society. In Finland, open governance and public access to official documents contribute to transparency and accountability as well as to the implementation of human rights.

Finland believes that climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity and the global COVID-19 pandemic are exposing humankind to unprecedented challenges regarding safeguarding our living conditions and human rights.

Finland regards the Human Rights Council as a fundamental cornerstone of the multilateral system and would be honoured to serve as its member with the objective of strengthening the respect for universal human rights for all.

In this spirit, we present the following voluntary pledges and commitments:

## **Promoting human rights in the Human Rights Council and across the UN**

1. We pledge to continue to push for the effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights across the entire UN system. We welcome the Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights.
2. We stand for furthering collaboration between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council to prevent conflicts and seek their resolution and enhance peace building.
3. We pledge to cooperate with all States to promote and protect human rights for all. We give high value to open and frank dialogue. We are committed to ensuring meaningful participation and working in close cooperation with national and international civil society organizations.
4. We pledge to support the Human Rights Council in addressing country-specific violations of human rights. We will work to uphold the role of the Council as a forum for dialogue on thematic human rights issues. Both thematic and country specific issues require our attention. We also pledge to promote the role of the Human Rights Council in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses.
5. We pledge to support the independence of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are committed to strengthening and supporting the Special Procedures and other international human rights mechanisms.
6. We pledge to continue our efforts to strengthen the budgetary situation of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and the Treaty Bodies. We pledge to continue supporting the OHCHR by voluntary contributions.
7. We pledge to support the OHCHR in offering technical assistance on human rights and capacity building at the country and regional level.
8. We pledge to uphold the standing invitation to all Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and to respond within the specified time limit to urgent appeals and communications.
9. We pledge to make effective use of the recommendations received by Finland from the UN Treaty Bodies and the recommendations issued in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) when developing policies and legislation. We pledge to contribute to the strengthening of the UPR mechanism by making thoughtful and specific recommendations.

10. We pledge to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
11. We pledge to conduct continuous dialogue with the UN Treaty Bodies. This will be done both in periodic reporting as well as through the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations. Similarly, we pledge to increase transparency in the national selection procedure for Finnish experts to be nominated as candidates for UN Treaty Bodies.
12. We pledge to strengthen the national implementation of our human rights obligations. Finland's third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights will include human rights indicators to support decision-making.

### **Supporting defenders of human rights**

1. We pledge to continue providing visible support to the work and rights of human rights defenders, placing particular attention on women, environmental and indigenous human rights defenders. We will step up efforts to implement our national guidelines on the protection and support of human rights defenders.
2. We pledge to support independent national human rights institutions and commissions, ombudspersons and equality bodies, in line with the Paris principles.
3. We pledge to protect and promote freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism, online and offline, and access to and accessibility of information. We pledge to ensure that human rights defenders, journalists, media workers and other actors of civil society are able to enjoy all human rights freely without harassment or reprisals.
4. We pledge to continue to work actively towards ending impunity for the most serious crimes under international law and to address the situation of victims and survivors of such crimes.
5. We pledge to work towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty. No one should be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### **Enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls**

1. We pledge to continue advancing gender equality and promoting the rights and equal opportunities of all women and girls in all their diversity.
2. We pledge to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that many women and girls face and promote an intersectional approach to gender equality.
3. Addressing the rights of women and girls with disabilities is a key priority for Finland.

4. We pledge to strengthen the public and political participation and decision-making power of all women, including young women. We will promote the right of women and girls to live without violence, including abuse and harassment, both offline and online.
5. We pledge to advance comprehensive understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights for everyone as well as high-quality and inclusive sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education, under all circumstances.
6. We pledge to remain strongly committed to the comprehensive implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

## **Embracing diversity and strengthening the participation of all persons**

1. We pledge to promote and strengthen the full, effective, equal, and meaningful participation of all persons, without discrimination of any kind.
2. We pledge to enhance the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to enjoy life free from violence, stigma and discrimination. Finland advocates for systems, structures and services that are inclusive and accessible to all persons with disabilities. Furthermore, we work to ensure their participation at all levels, in public and private life, and in activities of societies on an equal basis with others.
3. We pledge to continue our strong support for the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy that provides the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations.
4. We pledge to continue our efforts in promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of indigenous peoples, and enhancing their meaningful participation at the United Nations meetings on issues affecting them.
5. We pledge to protect and fulfil the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including national, ethnic, religious, sexual, gender and linguistic minorities in accordance with the applicable international norms and standards.
6. We pledge to step up international, regional and national efforts against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
7. We pledge to promote the right to freedom of religion and belief, including the freedom to change one's religion. We place special emphasis into improving the rights and situations of persons belonging to religious minorities.
8. We pledge to promote the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) persons and to continue to fight all discrimination against them. We are committed to stepping up political support for LGBTIQ+ persons and groups defending their rights.
9. We pledge to continue advocating that the particular needs of persons in vulnerable situations are considered in all humanitarian action.

## Human rights in the core of the Agenda 2030 implementation

1. We strongly support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights standards, putting equality and non-discrimination at the centre of all efforts.
2. We pledge to apply a human rights-based approach and the cross-cutting objectives of gender equality, non-discrimination, climate resilience and low emission development in all our development cooperation and policy actions.
3. We pledge to promote a stronger emphasis on the interlinkage between climate change and the full realization of human rights. We continue to implement and promote a just transition towards climate neutral development and climate resilience.
4. We pledge to advance the human rights to water and sanitation and acknowledge that safe drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights. Particular emphasis will be placed on the WASH facilities. We will foster a human rights-based approach to international water policy.
5. We pledge to support the right of all people to access equitable and inclusive education of the highest attainable quality, with a particular focus on girls, persons with disabilities and those in the most vulnerable situations. We give special attention to the youth and education for all in the global response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. We pledge to continue promoting the effective implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights domestically and at the international level.
7. We pledge to continue our strong support for the United Nations Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.
8. We pledge to advance a human rights-based approach and diversity in participation in the governance, design, development, procurement and use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence. Protecting the right to privacy and safeguarding personal and sensitive data is crucial in this regard.
9. We pledge to advance digital development that fosters gender equality and non-discrimination and that supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
10. We pledge to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights online for all. We will combat disinformation, hate speech and gender-based violence online through all available means, including as co-lead of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality and through the Freedom Online Coalition.
11. We pledge to bridge digital divides by enhancing inclusive policies, investment and the digital skills of all women and girls, as well as persons with disabilities.

12. We pledge to continue to work for a human rights-based approach to cybersecurity and finding a-common understanding on how existing international humanitarian law applies to cyber operations during armed conflict.
13. We pledge to work together to ensure that COVID-19 responses and recovery plans place human rights in the core of all efforts. Furthermore, we will work to ensure that the COVID-19 and other pandemics will not have permanent negative effects on human rights and gender equality.
14. We pledge to build back better and greener for the future generations, leaving no-one behind.