

FRENCH
candidacy
to **THE**
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COUNCIL

2021 - 2023

Over the past decade, there has been a decline in human rights in many parts of the world. New phenomena, such as the impact of climate change, increased global developmental inequalities and the rapid growth of digital technologies, have brought new threats: the emergence of mass terrorism, the decline of fundamental rights in many States, increased economic and social inequalities and new challenges to gender equality. At the same time, journalists and human rights defenders are now in more danger than ever and often pay with their lives for their commitment to human rights and democracy.

In the face of this, France is determined to promote humanist diplomacy, which is in line with 21st century issues and focused on achieving concrete results. It is within this context that France is presenting its candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the 2021-2023 term.

France has actively contributed to creating the multilateral structure which has been built since World War II to promote human rights, and particularly the Human Rights Council, which was founded in 2006. It has already been a member three times in the past. It has already undergone its Universal Periodic Review three times, and has applied many of its recommendations. It plays an active role in its work, even when it is not a member. It provides active support to the Human Rights Council's procedures and mechanisms of action. It has one of the world's most demanding national systems for the protection and promotion of human rights. The Human Rights Council is at the heart of the

international structure for the promotion and defence of human rights, based on law and on almost universally agreed norms. In recent years, this structure has been subject to many attacks – both on its operation but also on its very existence. To meet this challenge, we must enable the Human Rights Council to be fully attuned to changes around the world. We must provide it with the means to take effective action against the most serious human rights violations. And we must deal with the causes, and not just the symptoms, of the curtailed human rights which have been observed in recent years.

To do this, France has established three priorities for the 2021-2023 term, as set out in this brochure: combatting all forms of inequality and discrimination, protecting fundamental freedoms and helping those who defend human rights. France is prepared to use its energy, resources, commitment and influence to achieve this ambition within the Human Rights Council.

Jean-Yves Le Drian

French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs

FRENCH PRIORITIES

at the Human Rights Council

In line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in Paris on 10 December 1948, France is working to promote and protect all human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent. It has set three priority areas for its term at the Human Rights Council.



**| COMBATTING
ALL FORMS
OF INEQUALITY.**

Strengthening international mobilization for women's rights.

France is committed to ending **violence and discrimination against women** and to making **gender equality** a universal reality. At the invitation of UN Women and alongside the Mexican co-chairmanship, in July 2020 it will host the **Generation Equality Forum**, a global gathering for gender equality organized 25 years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It helped adopt the resolutions on “**Women, Peace and Security**” at the Security Council and is promoting their implementation. In 2019, it used its G7 and Ministerial Committee of the Council of Europe Presidencies to launch a campaign for the universalization of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing

and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (known as the **Istanbul Convention**). It is determined to protect and promote **sexual and reproductive health and rights**.

Promoting economic, social and cultural rights to fight inequality.

France is committed to fair globalization and the fight against inequality, and is working to uphold economic, social and cultural rights, particularly under the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. It is especially committed to new projects such as **corporate social responsibility, relations between human rights and the environment**, and the universal application of the **right to water and sanitation**. COP21, held in Paris in December 2015, showed France's determination to **fighting climate change and to raising awareness on its impact on human rights**. France is also involved in creating a **Global Pact for the Environment**,

which will be a new and vital step towards integrating human rights into environmental governance.

Combatting all forms of discrimination.

France is an active participant in the Human Rights Council mechanisms which help combat all forms of discrimination. It is fully involved in the fight against **racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia** and is working for hate speech to be prosecuted in compliance with human rights. France is working to defend and promote the rights of **LGBTI persons** and supports the resolutions adopted on sexual orientation and gender identity and the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Pursuing its work for the rights of the child and combatting the use of children in armed conflict.

France is heavily involved in the protection of children in armed conflicts, and in 2007, along with UNICEF, it created the **Free Children from War Conference** which led to the adoption of the Paris Principles and Paris Commitments, which are today endorsed by 108 States; in 2017, it organized a further conference on this issue. France actively participates in the **work of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict**, which it helped set up. It is also working to **combat forced child labour**.



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II PROTECTING FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS.

Ensuring the safety of journalists and the right to reliable information.

France is determined to defend **fundamental freedoms** such as the freedom of expression and is working so that they play a major role in multilateral forums. It defends texts dealing with the **protection of journalists** and the fight against impunity for crimes perpetrated against them. It supports the **International Partnership on Information & Democracy**, which aims to mobilize States, media professionals, digital companies and civil society in order to allow all citizens access to independent, plural and reliable information. Through development assistance, it supports media capacity building to promote access to pluralist and balanced information. It is determined to combat the manipulation of information. It also places great importance on the **freedom of religion and**

belief, to which secularism contributes, as well as on the pluralism of societies.

Fighting enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention.

France is determined to combat the scourge of enforced disappearance and was instrumental during negotiations to adopt the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED)**. It fully promotes its universal ratification, within the framework of the working group which it co-chairs with Argentina. At the Human Rights Council, France stand behind the initiative of the resolutions for the Working Group on **Arbitrary Detention**.

Promoting the universal abolition of the death penalty.

The fight for the universal abolition of the death penalty in all places and under all circumstances is a specific and constant commitment. France supports the biennial resolution of the United Nations General Assembly calling for the **creation of a universal moratorium** and contributes actively to adopting resolutions on this issue at the Human Rights Council.





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**III HELPING
PEOPLE WHO
PROMOTE
HUMAN RIGHTS.**

Supporting human rights defenders and civil society.

France is working to protect **human rights defenders** who are threatened or in danger against the worrying backdrop of reduced civil society space. It places great importance on their **independence and freedom of action**, in line with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders endorsed in 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly with the full support of France.

Fighting impunity.

France is convinced that there can be no lasting peace without justice and is pursuing its action to **fight against impunity** so that all perpetrators of human rights violations are brought to justice. It supports the right to the truth and the right of victims of human rights violations to receive reparation. It promotes the universality of the Rome Statute which established the **International Criminal Court** and supports the work of the Commissions of Inquiry and independent mechanisms set up by the Human Rights Council.

FRANCE:

THE CONVICTION AND RESOURCES TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS

1. The highest level of commitment in support of international instruments

As it demonstrated during its previous terms at the Human Rights Council, France works to promote **dialogue and cooperation between all regional and political groups**, and to make a practical contribution to **discussions to make the work of the Council, special procedures and treaty bodies more efficient**. It will continue to defend the **independence of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**.

France has ratified **the main international instruments on human rights**. In March 2015, it ratified the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in January 2016 the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It recognizes the competence of the Treaty bodies which it has ratified to receive individual complaints.

France has strengthened its **internal system for protecting and promoting human rights** with the creation of an **Inspector General of Facilities for Deprivation of Liberty** in 2007 and a

Defender of Rights in 2011.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) plays an essential role in promoting the universality of human rights.

France committed to implementing the recommendations set out during its second UPR in 2013 and submitted its mid-term report in February 2016. It underwent its **third UPR in January 2018** and is working to implement the recommendations which it accepted upon its conclusion.

France has issued a standing invitation to the Special Procedures of the United Nations for them to visit its territory. It has welcomed many independent experts and special rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in October 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy in November 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism in May 2018 and the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing in April 2019.

As a member of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, France is committed to promoting close dialogue on human rights with its partners. It complies with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, to which it is fully committed.

2. Development and cooperation, French levers for human rights action

Finally, in 2018, France adopted a “Human Rights and Development” strategy which meets two objectives: making French cooperation policy and development assistance a lever to promote human rights and ensuring that the projects which it finances do not undermine these rights.

This strategy will be built around four priorities:

- human rights education, by supporting programmes mainly aimed at children;*
- supporting development actors in implementing a rights-based development approach;*
- mobilizing public development assistance to provide concrete support to human rights defenders, including by financing projects for them;*
- supporting the effective implementation of the UPR recommendations accepted by States and the involvement of all relevant actors in the process.*

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Combatting
all forms of
discrimination

Pursuing
its work for the rights
of the child and
combatting the use
of children in armed
conflict

**II PROTECTING
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**Ensuring
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Fighting
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Promoting
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