



# 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 19 March 2019 from the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands 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 Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Human Rights Council for the term 2020–2022, at the elections to be held during the seventy-fourth session of the Assembly in New York.

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

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands 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 19 March 2019 from the  
Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations  
addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

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

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

1. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is proud to present its candidacy for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the term 2020–2022. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a staunch supporter of the Human Rights Council as the United Nations forum dedicated to multilateral cooperation and dialogue aimed at the realization of human rights for everyone, everywhere. We are pleased to publish our pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution [60/251](#).
2. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a firm believer in the intrinsic and universal value of individual human rights, which are key to development, security and prosperity. The Human Rights Council plays a crucial role in the realization of human rights. It should strive for consensus in seeking to meet the complex challenges that our world faces today, and it should act when human rights violations occur.
3. As a member of the Human Rights Council, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will be your partner in respecting human rights, reaching out to States and civil society partners and responding to human rights concerns.
4. Our bid to join the Human Rights Council reflects our long-standing and ongoing commitment to upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to promoting and safeguarding a rules-based international order. The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly believes that human rights are the foundation of human dignity and freedom and of open, free societies across the world. Our efforts reflect our firm conviction that the observance of human rights will lead to a more stable, prosperous and resilient world.
5. Membership of the Human Rights Council serves as a constant reminder of the need to advance universal human rights for all, nationally and internationally. Nationally, we work unremittingly to ensure that our national laws and policies comply fully with the highest human rights standards and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Internationally, human rights remain a cornerstone of Dutch foreign policy, including our policy on foreign trade and development cooperation.
6. The Kingdom of the Netherlands underscores the responsibility of members elected to the Human Rights Council to meet the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, to respect the independence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and to fully cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms. We will be independent, open to criticism and committed to fair play. We pledge to invest in a responsive, efficient and inclusive Human Rights Council.
7. We will respect all human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, at home and around the globe, reach out to States and civil society partners and respond to human rights concerns worldwide.

## Respect

- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to respect all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – on the basis of international human rights law.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands recognizes that no State has a perfect human rights record and pledges to promote, protect and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights for all at the national level.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue to engage constructively with all national and international human rights monitoring systems, with a view to ensuring that we honour our international obligations and sustain our respect for human rights.
- We are in the process of drafting a new national action plan on human rights, which will reflect the accepted recommendations from our universal periodic review in 2017 and recommendations made as part of treaty body reviews.
- We will further develop and implement our third national action plan for women, peace and security. We also commit to the implementation of our national action plan on business and human rights and our plans for action against racism, discrimination, trafficking in persons and other human rights violations.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to cooperate fully with OHCHR and the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms and to continue to pay our substantial annual contribution to the Office.
- We pledge to respect, promote and defend the independence of the High Commissioner and her Office at all times.
- We pledge to refrain from using procedural tactics, such as no action motions, to block genuine debate in the Human Rights Council.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to uphold the standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council, including future special procedures, and to facilitate country visit requests as effectively as possible.
- We pledge to respond in a timely manner to special procedures communications and urgent appeals.
- We pledge to cooperate fully with the human rights treaty body system and to protect and promote its independence, while reviewing ways to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to further a rights-based approach to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- We pledge to recognize the indivisibility, interdependence and universality of human rights in our policies and interventions. We are investing in global prospects through poverty reduction, the pursuit of sustainable and inclusive growth and climate action.
- We also uphold a rights-based and human security-based perspective in our integrated international security strategy, in terms of both conflict prevention and response. Discrimination, inequality and human rights violations are often underlying causes of conflict. The rule of law, the holding of perpetrators of human rights violations to account and transitional justice are needed to properly address root causes, break the cycle of violence and maintain peace.

- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to advance gender equality and improve the position of women and girls. We pledge zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

### **Reach out**

- Building on our national traditions, the Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue to promote inclusive, transparent dialogue and cooperation at all times in interregional discussions.
- We pledge to cooperate with all States, large and small, including current, past and future members of the Human Rights Council, to promote and protect human rights.
- We welcome innovative partnerships and encourage active participation at the national, regional and local or municipal levels.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to reach out to all non-governmental stakeholders and to work in close cooperation with civil society organizations, including human rights defenders, private sector representatives and religious leaders.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to promote universal participation and diversity in the Human Rights Council. We note with concern that, to date, about 90 States have never held a seat on the Council, including most small island developing States. To facilitate broader participation, the Netherlands pledges to continue its contribution to 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.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands reaffirms its continued support for the universal periodic review mechanism and will continue to participate actively in all review sessions. We underscore the importance of the universal periodic review as a truly egalitarian and transparent review process that has proven to be an invaluable tool for promoting and protecting human rights. We pledge to make at least two measurable and implementable recommendations to each State under review.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue its efforts to promote human rights through all appropriate multilateral forums and United Nations specialized agencies, including international financial institutions, to which we are a leading donor. We are committed to upholding the Human Rights Up Front initiative.
- We will continue to actively pursue our bilateral development and human rights policies, which emphasize dialogue, partnership and technical cooperation through the exchange of experiences, the provision of financial assistance and the application of a rights-based approach. Our specialized Human Rights Ambassador travels the world in support of these goals.

### **Respond**

- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to contribute to a more responsive and credible Human Rights Council by strengthening its ability to respond to human rights violations at the national and local levels.
- We will continue to play a leading role, together with our partners, in interregional discussions on strengthening the Human Rights Council. To this

end, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will proactively reflect on the Council's working methods, efficiency and ability to implement meaningful reforms.

- The Kingdom of the Netherlands will remind the Human Rights Council of its mandate to address human rights violations, including gross and systematic violations. In determining whether and how the Council should respond to a situation of concern, we pledge to apply objective and human rights-based criteria and to take leadership and responsibility in initiating action when the criteria are met.
- We pledge to actively engage in Human Rights Council efforts aimed at preventing human rights violations, and we will initiate or encourage early action in the Council on country situations and broad human rights concerns that could lead to human rights crises.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to strengthen accountability for perpetrators and to enhance access to remedy and justice for victims of human rights violations.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to remain committed to combating impunity for the most serious crimes under international law, by means of national or international criminal proceedings.
- We promote international tribunals and the authority and universality of the International Criminal Court and will continue to call upon the Security Council to refer cases to the Court as appropriate.
- Where necessary, the Kingdom of the Netherlands supports ad hoc mechanisms to collect, preserve and analyse evidence of human rights violations and to prepare files to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination for all.
- We will advance the right to freedom of expression. We will promote press freedom worldwide and condemn violence against and intimidation of journalists and media workers.
- We will promote the right to freedom of religion and belief, including the freedom to change one's religion and the right not to profess any religion, and will protect religious minorities.
- We will advance the capacity of the Human Rights Council to promote and protect equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. We pledge to continue our support for the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands will strive to create a safe and enabling environment for civil society. We pledge to respond to attacks on or intimidation of human rights defenders and to threats to civil society space, both offline and online, and to prevent reprisals.