

## **Candidacy of the Republic of Poland to the UN Human Rights Council 2020-2022**

### **Voluntary pledges and commitments**

1. Presenting its candidacy to the UN 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 fora 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 United Nations Security Council (2018 - 2019), Poland recognises 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 UN 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

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<sup>1</sup> International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD,1969), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1977), International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1977), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT, 1989), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1991), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2012), Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR-OP1, 1991), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (OP-CEDAW, 2003), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OP-CRC-AC, 2005), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OP-CRC-SC, 2005), Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No.210, 2015), the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No.201, 2015), the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED, 2013), Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 15 December 1989 (2014), Additional Protocol to the Council of

International Labour Organisation conventions on various aspects of protecting human and workers' rights and constantly cooperates with their monitoring bodies in order to implement the received recommendations.

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 respective conventions.
6. Poland declares to comply 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 has been 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) safeguards 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 (UPR) is currently the unique mechanism that allows efficient monitoring and assessing the human rights review of all UN Member States. Poland will strive to maintain the UPR's integrity and universality by respecting the principle of equal treatment, cooperation between the Member States, and ensuring the extensive involvement of the 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 UN Member States which have not been members of this body so far should be more involved. In 2018 Poland has joined the Voluntary Trust Fund to support the participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Inland Developing States (SIDS) in the work of the HRC.
10. The Human Rights Council underlined on numerous occasions the link between the negative impacts of climate change and the 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).

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Europe Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems (2015), Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs (2015).

To achieve 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 an 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 UN 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. UN Human Rights Council – the main global body responsible for protecting, respecting and promoting human rights:**

1. Poland voluntarily participated in the three cycles of the Universal Periodic Review to date (last time in May 2017), taking comprehensive efforts to implement the majority of received recommendations.
2. Poland has extended and maintains a standing invitation to all UN 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, particularly in debates on children rights, promoting good governance and the rights of religious minorities,
4. Poland recognises 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 United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights for strengthening the Office and for promotion and protection of human rights around the world.
6. We recognise the need for all UN Member States to take part in the Council's work. In 2018 Poland joined the Voluntary Trust Fund to support the participation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Inland Developing States (SIDS) in their work of the 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 ICRC and the 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 UN and EU 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 education, malnutrition reduction and poverty eradication.
2. Poland has initiated and been actively involved in drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, inspired by the legacy of dr. Janusz Korczak, dating to the 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 UN initiatives and campaigns in this regard.
4. Poland will strive to eliminate gaps in the protection of persons with disabilities. Within the UN system, we are particularly engaged in the protection of persons with Down's syndrome and autism. In 2012 Poland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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

1. Enhancing its policies that address the 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 3+ families in public and private institutions), the **Mama 4+ Programme** (benefits for parents of 4 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 UN 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 UN Agenda on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2021**, based on Security Council resolution 1325 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.