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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 29 April 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Montenegro to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Montenegro has the honour to refer to the candidature of Montenegro to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the term 2022–2024, at the elections to be held during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission has the further honour to submit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of Montenegro, reaffirming its commitment to the promotion of and respect for all human rights and its active engagement in the work of the Human Rights Council (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Montenegro would be grateful if the present note verbale and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.



Annex to the note verbale dated 29 April 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Montenegro to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Montenegro to the Human Rights Council, 2022–2024

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

1. Montenegro is strongly committed to the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels. The human rights perspective is based on all national policies and strategies, thereby reflecting our commitment to democratic values and ensuring the prosperity, well-being and better future of all our citizens. Internal priorities reflect our commitment to the values and principles on which a rules-based international order rests. We are determined to implement reforms that will ensure the sustainable development and economic progress of our society, both constantly and thoroughly.

2. Montenegro remains determined to strengthen the rule of law and to combat all human rights infringements. Montenegro has always acted as a positive example of multi-ethnic harmony, in which the rights and freedoms of members of all religions and nations are equally esteemed and respected, therefore, preservation of cultural, ethnic and confessional diversity remains high on our national priorities list. Montenegro maintains good relations with its neighbours and it is widely recognized as a factor of stability in the region, as an advocate of peace, multi-ethnic harmony and regional cooperation.

3. Respect for human rights and freedoms is imperative; therefore, apart from the national level, Montenegro tends to support the wider international community in its efforts to prevent the violation of rights and the suppression of freedoms worldwide. With our positive example, we seek to encourage others to take decisive and results-based action, which will ultimately contribute to a better quality of life for their citizens.

4. Montenegro is active in almost all multilateral forums dealing with human rights. We intend to continue this practice, to point out shortcomings and promote positive examples and good practices concerning respect for human rights and freedoms, as a reliable partner of the international community. Our determination is confirmed also by our previous membership of the Human Rights Council in the period 2013–2015, with which we have always had open and successful cooperation. We are proud that during our membership in the Council, significant progress has been made and important documents have been negotiated, by means of which States have additionally committed themselves to improving the position of vulnerable groups, such as the global compact on refugees. During our term of office, we have consistently and firmly advocated for enhancement of particularly those aspects of human rights to which we have committed ourselves within the promises we have made in the course of the previous candidacy.

5. Montenegro's previous membership in the Human Rights Council and current membership in the Economic and Social Council have been useful in multiple ways also with regard to development at the national level, strengthening institutions and professional capacities. This experience served as an additional incentive to upgrade national approaches to the protection and promotion of human rights and contributed to strengthening the national human rights dialogue.

6. Sustainable development, economic growth, prosperity and continuous improvement of the standard of living of our citizens are among the key priorities of the Government. We are assured that human rights are of utmost significance for achieving the respective goals.

7. Fundamental rights must be protected and we are convinced that, although small in size, countries such as Montenegro can make a major contribution to a comprehensive response to serious human rights violations, but also serve as a vocal advocate for their protection and promotion. Our guiding principle is that we wish to contribute to strengthening the global response to human rights violations. We remain committed to participating in the protection of human rights and the promotion of human rights principles and standards on a global level.

International level

8. Montenegro remains committed to a multilateral system based on universal values and principles, based on an effective United Nations, which is capable of providing an adequate response to global crises, challenges and threats. In addition, Montenegro:

(a) Actively promotes and supports the integration and introduction of human rights in all aspects of United Nations operations;

(b) Is committed to the protection and promotion of human rights, democratic values and the rule of law, as well as the fight against impunity for human rights violations and abuses;

(c) Is determined to continue to improve the situation of women and girls, protect the rights of children, as well as the rights of the elderly and persons with disabilities, safeguard media freedoms, civil society actions, and combat discrimination based on any grounds. We strongly advocate for a greater role for women as leaders and important decision-makers, actors in conflict prevention and resolution as well as post-conflict reconciliation. Our firm commitment to this area is substantiated by our presidency of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Executive Board in 2018;

(d) Is strongly committed to the eradication of all forms of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity, to the mobilization of all actors and to active policies at the international level to improve the status and security of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. In this area, Montenegro has been recognized as a regional leader;

(e) Strongly supports United Nations human rights mechanisms and all the efforts made with respect to a stronger and more effective Human Rights Council. We opt for a comprehensive, inclusive and broad dialogue to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's work and to add to the existing achievements and successes of the respective United Nations body.

9. Montenegro is a member of nearly all human rights conventions and accompanying protocols and duly submits reports on their implementation. In addition, Montenegro regularly reports on the human rights situation in the country and has successfully completed three cycles of the universal periodic review. It has voluntarily committed itself to compose a midterm report between the two cycles, and it is also preparing to compose a regular, fourth, national report in 2022.

10. The Government of Montenegro is continuously working on improving the mechanism for reporting and centralizing the information collected in such a manner. Montenegro is one of the pilot countries in establishing an Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights database for reporting and monitoring

human rights recommendations regarding treaty bodies and special procedures. This software will facilitate monitoring of the implementation of recommendations, as well as drafting of reports in compliance with the treaty bodies and United Nations human rights mechanisms.

11. We continuously collaborate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen the institutional capacities and skills of our human rights professionals and experts. We particularly follow special procedures of the Human Rights Council, for which the Government of Montenegro has sent a standing invitation for visits to Montenegro and its institutions.

National framework

12. Montenegro is continuously working on strengthening the system of protection and promotion of human rights through improving the legal framework, encouraging respect and protection of human rights and raising the awareness of the entire society with respect to this matter. We have implemented comprehensive reforms to harmonize the national framework with international standards and thus we remain committed to further enhancement of existing policies and legislation.

13. It is our goal to enforce national dialogue on human rights, which ought to contribute to an advanced application of international standards. We continuously carry out education and training courses on human rights in the area of human rights promotion and protection against discrimination for civil servants, judges and public prosecutors, police officers, social workers and medical staff. In particular, we point to our results in a number of crucial areas:

(a) One of the priorities in the work of the Government is the protection and promotion of the rights of children. We have achieved remarkable progress in terms of the de-institutionalization of children through foster care programmes, in the field of violence prevention and protection for children and we have provided education for children with special educational needs. We collaborate with all relevant international and non-governmental organizations to improve the lives of every child in our country, especially the most vulnerable, and to ensure a better future for them. We have enacted child-friendly strategies and approaches in a number of areas in order to support further development and full exercise of children's rights;

(b) Montenegro has achieved significant results in protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons. As a significant step towards equality and tolerance in our society in this area, the Parliament of Montenegro has passed the Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex in July 2020. This law is the result of efforts of the Government and NGOs that worked together to draft its text. It regulates subsistence between partners, as one of the most important consequences of the partnership, then regulates in detail the property relations of the partners and their tax status in terms of tax benefits arising from life in the community. Also, the partners are equal in terms of rights and obligations in the health insurance and health care system with the rights of other insured persons, based on pension and disability insurance, as well as in terms of social and child protection rights and other rights and obligations arising from living together;

(c) Montenegro works intensively to prevent all forms of discrimination based on disability. We have harmonized national legislation with the highest international standards. Montenegro has passed a separate law specifically prohibiting all forms of discrimination on the grounds of disability. The Strategy for Protection from Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and Promotion of Equality for the period 2017–2021 was adopted along with the accompanying action plan. The legal grounds have been strengthened by a number of public awareness campaigns and

educational campaigns for diverse target groups. A lot has been done to create the conditions for making public facilities accessible to persons with disabilities;

(d) Montenegro has achieved significant results in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. A comprehensive approach to gender equality at the national level focuses on three priorities: increasing women's political participation, combating violence against women, and women's economic empowerment;

(e) Montenegro has provided assistance and support to refugees and displaced persons during the conflict in our region. We carry out numerous activities to improve the social and economic status of refugees and displaced persons, with a special focus on education, health care, social protection and the issue of permanent housing. Montenegro has acceded to key international legal instruments governing this area and is strengthening its national institutional and legislative framework in this area;

(f) Freedom of media and the safety of journalists are indispensable pillars of any democratic society and are therefore high on the list of priorities of the Government of Montenegro. The Government of Montenegro is committed to improving the adequate environment for free and undisturbed work of media workers as well as the conditions to report objectively and accurately without any fear or obstacles. It is imperative for the Government to prevent violence against journalists and media workers and to conduct impartial, prompt and efficient investigations to bring the perpetrators of attacks on journalists and crimes against journalists to justice;

14. The Government is fully committed to cooperating with civil society representatives, as important partners to promote and protect human rights in the country. The civil sector continuously takes part in working groups for drafting laws and strategic documents and implements joint initiatives and projects with the Government. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations has been further improved after the introduction of a decentralized model of financing their projects from the state budget.

Voluntary commitment of Montenegro in the context of candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council, 2022–2024.

15. Montenegro commits itself:

(a) To undertake activities to promote multilateral cooperation and engagement of all actors in achieving standards of universal human rights in the world;

(b) To defend and promote the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights at all levels, particularly throughout complex challenges and crises;

(c) To fully cooperate with civil society and advocate for the creation of an environment that enables significant and unhindered participation of civil society in the work of the Human Rights Council;

(d) To promote international human rights law and international humanitarian law within the United Nations;

(e) To promote intercultural dialogue among the Member States to foster understanding and relations between different cultures and peoples;

(f) To assist the work of the Human Rights Council and provide support to the Council to improve its efficiency and effectiveness;

(g) To work on strengthening the role of the Human Rights Council in the prevention of conflicts and assist the Council in responding to new crises and conflicts;

(h) To provide full support to the work and mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the independence and integrity of his Office;

(i) To promote the activities and independence of special procedures and treaty bodies to improve the human rights situation globally;

(j) To continue to strongly advocate for further strengthening of the universal periodic review system, actively promote this mechanism and share experiences and good practices related to it;

(k) To continue to call on all states to take action to abolish the death penalty.

16. Montenegro will continue to protect and promote human rights at the national level and will:

(a) Promote and strengthen national human rights dialogue and improve cooperation among all relevant actors;

(b) Strengthen the capacities of competent human rights institutions and improve professional and expert staff;

(c) Enhance national policies and constantly harmonize them with international standards in this area;

(d) Continue to advance mechanisms for the protection of human rights of vulnerable groups, in particular women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI) persons, minority groups, persons with disabilities, children, the elderly, displaced and internally displaced persons and migrants;

(e) Continue to protect and advance human rights advocates, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or social status;

(f) Ensure a resolute fight against trafficking in humans, especially in the areas of prevention, protection of victims, prosecution, as well as in the areas of partnership, coordination and international cooperation;

(g) Remain committed to facing a global environmental crisis and promoting the rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment;

(h) Continue to make efforts focused on the needs and priorities of youth and their participation in the social, political, economic and cultural development of society;

(i) Continuously keep meeting its international obligations by submitting regular reports to United Nations treaty bodies and implementing the recommendations it receives.
