



General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 August 2023

Original: English

Seventy-eighth session

Item 116 (c) of the provisional agenda*

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

Note verbale dated 15 August 2023 from the Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait has the honour to refer to the candidature of the State of Kuwait to the Human Rights Council for the term 2024–2026, at the elections to be held in October 2023 in New York.

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

The Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait would be grateful to the President of the General Assembly if the present note and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 116 (c) of the provisional agenda.

* [A/78/150](#).



**Annex to the note verbale dated 15 August 2023 from the
Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

[Original: Arabic]

The State of Kuwait is convinced of the need to strengthen and protect human rights at the national level, in accordance with the Constitution of 1962. It has a rich tradition of exercising democracy, one that is grounded in the rule of law, the protection and consolidation of rights and freedoms, and the realization of social justice. It seeks to take that process forward and proactively develop the State. Those goals are enshrined in the Government's vision as laid out in its most recent programme of action on reform. Kuwait is a candidate for membership of the Human Rights Council for the 2024–2026 term.

Kuwait is committed to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It understands that those rights have implications for States and affect their conduct. Kuwait therefore wishes to set out before the Human Rights Council the following achievements, pledges and commitments in the area of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, which are intended to advance human rights at the national and international levels.

I. Sustainable Development Goals

Kuwait has launched a new national development vision for the future, entitled New Kuwait 2035. The aim is to transform Kuwait into an investment-friendly, private-sector-driven financial and commercial hub that would foster a spirit of competition and boost productivity backed by a supportive State structure; strengthen values and protect social identity; achieve balanced human development; and foster an enabling environment. The 2035 vision has been harmonized with the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs) in order to ensure that the national plan is in lockstep with the international development agenda. At the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in July 2023, Kuwait presented its second voluntary national report setting out its achievements in implementing the 17 SDGs.

II. Rights of women and children

- Kuwait is endeavouring to implement Goal 5 of the SDGs, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. That goal has been incorporated in the 2035 vision, which includes the following three initiatives:
 - Combating discrimination and violence against women
 - Creating an enabling environment for female entrepreneurship
 - Encouraging the appointment of women to leadership posts.
- As part of its drive for gender equality, Kuwait has, for the first time in its history, established a ministry responsible for the family, women and children. It has also established a committee on women, the family and childhood within the National Assembly (Parliament). In order to empower women in leadership roles, all successive governments over the last decade have included female ministers. A woman was elected in the recent elections for the National Assembly, and four women have been appointed to the Municipal Council. For the first time in the country's history, a woman has been appointed Deputy Minister of Defence. There has been a marked increase in female staff in such

sectors as the public prosecution service, the judiciary, police and security, the fire department and the diplomatic corps.

- Kuwait has endeavoured to ensure that women are represented in all the sporting bodies recognized by the International Olympic Committee. On behalf of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, the Women's Sports Committee has made every effort to promote women's sports in Kuwait, and its mandate was formulated with that end in mind. Since 2018, the Committee has played a significant role. It has established women's committees within 13 Kuwaiti sports federations to organize women's activities in the relevant sports. On 26 May 2021, the General Assembly of the Kuwait Olympic Committee adopted a strategy to develop women's sports in Kuwait. As part of the strategy, the Assembly agreed to amend the statutes of sports federations in order to ensure that, in the forthcoming elections to be held in 2023, a position will be allocated to women on the board of directors of each sporting federation.
- Kuwait endeavours to preserve and protect the rights of the child. Mindful of the State's responsibility towards children, it attaches considerable importance to the next generation, who are the cornerstone of efforts to build a great nation without discrimination. Article 10 of the Constitution provides that the State shall care for young persons and protect them from exploitation and from moral, physical and spiritual neglect.
- Kuwait has spared no effort in adopting laws expanding the rights of the child. Act No. 21 (2015) concerning the rights of the child meets the relevant international standards. The Juveniles Act (Act No. 111 (2015)), as amended by Act No. 1 (2017), is consistent with the international commitments and principles set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the two Optional Protocols thereto and the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. Article 33 provides for the establishment of a juvenile court adapted to the nature of the child, and for social measures to prevent juveniles from going astray.
- The Government is committed to involving civil society in designing policies and programmes on children's rights. The Chair of the National Committee for the Protection of Children played an effective part in formulating the Children's Act (Act No. 21 (2015)). In partnership with the National Family Safety League (Rawasi), a family and social guidance team has been established within the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

III. Persons with disabilities

- Kuwait has endeavoured to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and ensure that they can live with dignity and participate effectively in building Kuwaiti society. Accordingly, Act No. 8 (2010) concerning the rights of persons with disabilities is based on general principles including the need to respect personal dignity, refrain from discrimination, mainstream persons with disabilities into society, guarantee equal opportunities, put measures in place to facilitate access to opportunities and services, uphold equality between men and women, and respect the capacities of children with disabilities by offering teaching and training consistent with their disability.
- By virtue of Act No. 8 (2010), Kuwait has established a Public Authority for Persons with Disabilities, which upholds the rights of that social group. The Authority provides numerous services to persons with disabilities in Kuwait, and seeks to mainstream them into society. For that purpose, it works closely with non-profit associations, particularly those active in the area of disability, which play an active and considerable part in raising awareness. In cooperation

with the Authority, the associations are implementing promising projects to help persons with disabilities to access public and private sector jobs. The projects have encouraged the private sector to genuinely consider employing persons with disabilities like any other person. The Authority works with the Ministry of Education to foster the mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in public and private education.

- The Government has included persons with disabilities in its programme of work for 2021–2025, particularly in the component on developing human capital, which involves young persons, women and persons with disabilities. The aim is to diversify career paths and develop the skills of young persons, eliminate all forms of discrimination, mainstream persons with disabilities into the labour force and society, and involve them in small and medium enterprises.
- The Kuwait Disability Club has made considerable achievements in the area of persons of disabilities. It seeks to change the understanding of disabled sports by genuinely mainstreaming persons with disabilities into society; helping to develop curricula on sports for persons with disabilities; supporting disability specialists in working with that category; and organizing and refereeing relevant sporting events. The Club has played a prominent part in various individual and collective events in international and regional tournaments. It was founded in 1977, something that reflects the country's interest in persons with disabilities.

IV. Combating trafficking in persons

- Kuwait is an importer of expatriate labour and provides job opportunities in numerous areas. It has therefore worked to ensure that its laws, particularly in the areas covered under the 2035 vision, reflect the growing number of expatriate workers. By virtue of Act No. 109 (2013), Kuwait established a Workforce Authority to balance the interests of employers and employees. The Authority is committed to enforcing the Labour Act, respecting the conventions of the International Labour Organization and fulfilling their aims. It can refer any suspected case of trafficking in persons to the competent authorities.
- In an endeavour to eliminate trafficking in persons, Kuwait has adopted Act No. 91 (2013) on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The Act defines the offence of trafficking in persons and provides strengthened penalties, up to life imprisonment, for perpetrators. The Act reflects the international standards enshrined in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, its Protocols and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which Kuwait ratified in 2006.
- As part of its efforts to protect the victims of trafficking in persons, Kuwait has established the first shelter for expatriate workers in the region. The shelter offers the necessary protection; provides essential services, including health care and legal services; and facilitates access to redress for victims. In September 2016, Kuwait hosted the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Special Rapporteur highlighted the country's cooperation with United Nations entities and international and regional organizations in the area of migrant labour. She commended its efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. She visited the women's shelter and praised it as one of a kind in the region. In view of the widespread praise for the shelter, action is being taken to establish a new shelter for men, with greater resources.
- As an example of the measures taken by Kuwait to combat that offence, the Office of the Public Prosecutor has established a specialized unit that takes

timely action against all forms of trafficking in persons in a manner commensurate to their legal characterization. The Ministry of the Interior has established a department to protect public morals and combat trafficking in persons with a view to following up on relevant cases. In 2021, that department established a hotline to receive complaints and reports of trafficking in persons.

- Kuwait has adopted a national strategy on combating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, under the slogan “A Kuwait free from trafficking”. The strategy has three main components, namely prevention, protection and building partnerships at the domestic, regional and international levels to ensure that all national policies and actions have a tangible effect in enforcing provisions related to trafficking in persons.
- In order to complement the strategy, a standing national committee has been established with a view to its implementation. In cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, the committee has adopted a national referral mechanism to prevent trafficking in persons. The mechanism acts as a model and a road map for all competent national actors to address cases of trafficking in persons.

V. Freedom of religion and belief

- Tolerance and peaceful coexistence have been part of the make-up of Kuwait since its inception. The first church in Kuwait was opened in 1931, thirty years before independence. People of various faiths live in Kuwait and practise their religions freely. In article 35, the Constitution enshrines absolute freedom of belief and provides that the State shall protect the freedom to perform religious rites in accordance with established traditions, without prejudice to public order or morals.
- In order to protect the national fabric, Kuwait has adopted Act No. 19 (2012) on protecting national unity. The Act prohibits discrimination in rights or duties owing to race, colour, descent, sex, religion, origin or tribal, sectarian or confessional affiliation.
- Kuwait is convinced of the importance of the freedom of religion and belief. It consistently and persistently defends freedom of religion. For that purpose, it has established a high-level committee to promote moderation. The committee calls for tolerance in beliefs and moderation in action, which are among the foundations of the pure Islamic faith. It seeks to foster a culture of peace based on faith, and takes practical action to realize the principles of such a culture, including respect for human rights and freedom of opinion, religion and belief. The committee has found a suitable environment for its work; the State is consistently committed to strengthening the culture of peace and fostering dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions, because it understands that when freedom of religion shrinks, hate speech proliferates.

VI. Cooperation with international mechanisms

- Kuwait enjoys excellent relations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Several United Nations human rights officials have visited Kuwait, particularly the following:
 - The former High Commissioner Navi Pillay visited in April 2010 and engaged in intensive discussions. She met with the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and with several non-profit organizations and government officials.

- The former High Commissioner Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-Hussein visited in February 2017. He welcomed the country’s complete commitment to submitting its reports to the relevant committees within the specified time, and praised its efforts in a range of areas related to women, children and foreign residents.
- The former Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, visited in September 2016. She commended Act No. 91 (2013) on trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants and the laws on expatriate labour in the public, private and domestic sectors. She welcomed the introduction of harmonized work contracts and the conclusion of bilateral memorandums of understanding with a number of States to facilitate the recruitment of expatriate workers in their countries of origin and provide them with legal means for that process.
- The Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice established by the Human Rights Council visited on 16 December 2016. It met with a large number of officials, agencies, authorities, ministries and civil society organizations in order to consider and understand the relevant laws, with a particular focus on the achievements of Kuwait in strengthening human and women’s rights.
- The former Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas Aguilar, visited in December 2018 in order for Kuwait to engage in interactive dialogue, benefit from her views and learn about working methods in the area of persons with disabilities.
- The former Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Saad Alfarargi, visited in February 2023. He was briefed on the efforts made by Kuwait in the areas of economic and social development and the realization of the SDGs, not to mention the country’s support for developing States, particularly Arab States. Such support includes financial support and charitable and volunteer work.
- The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, visited in May 2023. She commended the advanced situation of Kuwaiti women and their achievements in a range of areas at several levels.
- The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas Andrews, visited in June 2023. He met directly with the officials who cover the human rights situation in Myanmar and highlighted the outstanding role of Kuwait in providing humanitarian and development support to those affected in Myanmar, and in advocating for their cause at the national and international levels. He praised the vital role of Kuwait in highlighting the Rohingya issue.
- Kuwait has held annual training sessions in cooperation with OHCHR for government agencies and human rights committees. The aim is to explain general human rights concepts, the relevant international instruments, their enforcement mechanisms, international standards, the domestic application of human rights, and international human rights treaty bodies. Kuwait is determined to fulfil its voluntary commitments further to the third cycle of its universal periodic review.

VII. Treaty bodies

- In order to comply with the country’s obligations under fundamental human rights conventions and treaties, a standing national committee for the preparation of reports and follow-up on recommendations related to human rights, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was established in December 2019. The committee

encompasses all government agencies. It prepares all reports on human rights mechanisms and follows up on comments and concluding observations. Kuwait is committed to submitting its reports to treaty bodies at the specified times. Kuwait recently reported to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2021, and to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2022. In 2023, it will review its periodic report to the Human Rights Committee.

- Kuwait has ratified the following seven fundamental human rights treaties two optional protocols on human rights:
 1. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 2. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 3. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
 4. The Convention on the Rights of the Child
 5. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
 6. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
 7. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

VIII. Human rights commitments of Kuwait at the national and international levels

- Kuwait undertakes to fulfil its international obligations in a spirit of responsibility, partnership and solidarity with a view to implementing the SDGs. With that end in mind, it will refine its national development policies in cooperation with all segments of society and in the context of its national vision.
- Kuwait undertakes to cooperate with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, special procedures and complaints procedures. It will contribute proactively to the resolutions and president's statements of the Human Rights Council. It will work to implement the national referral mechanism programme to document cases of trafficking in persons, and will give instructions to officials in the relevant agencies regarding the measures to be taken at each stage.
- Kuwait will remain engaged with issues related to missing persons in armed conflict. In so doing, it will build on its work as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in the 2018–2019 term, during which it submitted Security Council resolution [2474 \(2019\)](#), and on its own experience in searching for missing persons. It will support international initiatives in that area and will press for living missing persons and their relatives to be able to enjoy their human rights.
- Kuwait undertakes to submit and review its periodic reports to international human rights treaty bodies. It will work to improve the situation of human rights within Kuwait.
- Kuwait remains committed to improving the situation of migrants and tackling the tragedies which they face. It is convinced of the need to protect them and uphold their rights. Accordingly, it will continue to support the International Organization for Migration.
- Convinced of the need for joint and collective action to improve the situation of human rights, Kuwait will cooperate with States and exchange expertise in that area.

- Through collective action, Kuwait will contribute to all internationally agreed initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation and solidarity among States in strengthening the work of the Human Rights Council and enabling it to serve States and peoples.
 - In order to support the efforts made by OHCHR to protect and strengthen human rights, and the efforts made by States to improve their own human rights situations, Kuwait will consider concluding a memorandum of understanding and cooperation with OHCHR.
 - During its term as a member of the Human Rights Council, Kuwait will endeavour to assist vulnerable groups and intensify its efforts to empower women, uphold their rights and protect children, older persons and persons with disabilities.
 - Kuwait is mindful of the importance of the family in social development and in strengthening human rights. It will therefore work to address related issues, including family violence, and will continue to bolster the role of shelters for protection from family violence.
 - Kuwait believes in the contribution made by civil society and non-governmental organizations in the area of human rights. It will continue to cooperate with such organizations and will give them a prominent and vital role in strengthening human rights in Kuwait.
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