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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 31 August 2023 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the candidature of the Republic of Cuba to the Human Rights Council for the term 2024–2026, at the elections to be held on 10 October 2023 in New York.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba is pleased to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments (see annex), reaffirming the priority that Cuba attaches to international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights for all within the United Nations framework and, in particular, its commitment to strengthening the work of the Human Rights Council.

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

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



**Annex to the note verbale dated 31 August 2023 from the
Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the
President of the General Assembly**

**Candidature of the Republic of Cuba to the Human Rights
Council, 2024–2026**

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

I. Introduction

1. Cuba has presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2024–2026, at the elections to be held on 10 October 2023 in the General Assembly of the United Nations.
2. Our country is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of all human rights and to international cooperation in this area.
3. Cuba participated actively and constructively in the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Human Rights Council, as well as in the institution-building process of that body.
4. In its national capacity and as Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at the time, our country worked to ensure that the new body would serve as a forum for the genuine promotion of respectful dialogue and international cooperation in the field of human rights.
5. As a member of the Council, Cuba has contributed to the shared goal of enabling all individuals and peoples throughout the world to enjoy all human rights, on the basis of respect for the Charter of the United Nations, the internationally agreed human rights instruments and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.
6. If re-elected to the Human Rights Council for the period 2024–2026, Cuba commits to continue promoting an approach based on cooperation and respectful and constructive dialogue in the work of the United Nations human rights machinery.
7. We will also continue to promote initiatives on such vital issues as the right to food and the promotion of cultural rights as essential prerequisites for the enjoyment of all human rights and the progressive development of third-generation rights, including international solidarity.
8. As a member of this body, Cuba will continue to speak with its own voice, contributing its experience as a developing country and an advocate for dialogue and cooperation, opposed to politicized and punitive approaches and selectivity and in favour of the promotion and protection of all human rights for all.
9. Cuba would highly appreciate the valuable support of the States Members of the United Nations for its candidature as a member of the Human Rights Council in the elections to be held on 10 October.

II. Enjoyment of human rights in Cuba

10. Cubans have made significant progress in the enjoyment of all their human rights, in the areas of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights, as well as in the fulfilment of third-generation rights.
11. Cuba defends its right to self-determination in the face of the grave obstacles and threats resulting from the policy of hostility, acts of aggression and the economic,

commercial and financial blockade imposed against the country for more than 60 years, which constitutes a blatant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of the Cuban people.

12. Despite the criminal blockade against Cuba, our country's important achievements in health, education, scientific and technical research, culture and sports are known internationally. This has been possible because the Cuban people are the masters of their political destiny and the country's resources, exercise the fullest power and control over the country's life, and participate actively in the system of democracy that they designed and approved in a universal plebiscite.

13. On 24 February 2019, in a popular referendum and following a widely participatory and democratic exercise, the current Constitution was approved with 86.85 per cent of votes in favour. This was an essential step in strengthening the country's legal and institutional framework for the protection and promotion of human rights.

14. Since then, a process of comprehensive legislative reform has been taking place, drawing on the context of Cuban society, the obligations of Cuba under international instruments, national development goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. The most significant advances made by Cuba over the last five years in the field of human rights are set out below.

Fight against racism and discrimination

16. The national programme to combat racism and racial discrimination was approved in 2019. Its aims include addressing the vestiges of discrimination that still exist in society and monitoring results, raising awareness of the Cuban population's African heritage and encouraging public debate on racial issues. A national commission was established to follow up on these actions.

17. Progress is being made in improving representation in government structures. A total of 45.11 per cent of the citizens elected as deputies to the National Assembly of People's Power and 42.9 per cent of the members of the Council of State are black or mixed race.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women

18. The national programme for the advancement of women was approved in November 2020. The Council of Ministers approved the comprehensive strategy for the prevention of, and support in relation to, gender-based and family violence in 2021.

19. Act No. 156/2022, the "Family Code", entered into force in 2022, which evidenced the importance given by the State to family as an institution, in line with the Cuban context and international standards on the matter. The Code recognizes different forms of family organization.

20. An advocacy division was recently established under the Ministry of Justice, which will contribute to implementation of the new Family Code.

21. In June 2023, the Gender Equality Observatory was opened to strengthen the gender perspective when developing indicators and collecting statistics.

22. A total of 52.3 per cent of decision-making positions in the country are held by women. In the tenth legislative term of the parliament of Cuba (2023–2028), 182 women were elected as presidents or vice-presidents of the Municipal Assemblies of People's Power, accounting for 54.49 per cent of the total.

23. Women account for 55.74 per cent of the members of the national parliament and 52.38 per cent of the members of the Council of State. Cuba has the second-highest percentage of women in parliament in the world. In 2023, one position of Deputy Prime Minister is held by a woman and five ministers are women.

24. Women make up 66 per cent of the country's technicians and professionals; more than 81.9 per cent of professors, teachers and scientists; and more than 70 per cent of prosecutors, presidents of provincial tribunals, professional judges and the workforce in the health and education sectors.

25. Women make up 49.3 per cent of those employed in the science, innovation and technology sector, and 53 per cent of scientists. They represent 70.9 per cent of public health sector employees, 62 per cent of doctors, 64.2 per cent of the staff who provide collaborative services in various countries around the world and 72.2 per cent of specialized physicians.

Rights of persons with disabilities

26. In 2021, a national committee for follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established, which is responsible for addressing, monitoring, guiding and coordinating this issue.

27. The new Family Code, Act No. 156 of 2022, strengthens regulations with the aim of advancing the social inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the social and family environment.

28. The Labour Code provides for equality without any type of discrimination that is detrimental to human dignity.

29. The Cuban Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, a new Cuban civil society organization that promotes the inclusive development of this population group and the full exercise of their rights, was established in June 2023.

30. This organization joins others that bring together persons with disabilities. These are the Cuban Association of Persons with Physical and Motor Disabilities, the National Association of Deaf Persons of Cuba and the National Association of Blind Persons of Cuba.

Reform of the criminal justice system

31. A comprehensive reform of the criminal justice system has been undertaken, which has led to profound changes in substantive and procedural criminal norms such as the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Act and the Criminal Enforcement Act.

32. These amendments have resulted, inter alia, in the updating of institutions, definitions and criminal offences consistent with the international treaties in force for the Republic of Cuba, and in the regulation of due process standards. They also establish guarantees, limits, powers and rights for all those involved in the criminal process and a solution to the regulatory dispersion concerning the enforcement of penalties and security measures, while guaranteeing due process in the execution of judgments.

Right to food

33. The Food Sovereignty and Nutrition Education Plan has been implemented in Cuba since July 2020 as a national platform aimed at achieving full food security.

34. In 2022, Act No. 148, the Food and Nutrition Sovereignty and Security Act, was adopted, which establishes the general legal framework governing protection of the right of all to healthy and adequate food.

35. Food import substitution is currently being promoted and there is an emphasis on the need to increase local production and reduce vulnerability to international prices, unfair global trade relations, the restrictions on the country resulting from the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States, and the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

International solidarity

36. Cuba has demonstrated its firm commitment to the promotion and protection of the human rights of its people and other peoples of the world.

37. Several of them have benefited directly from the ongoing commitment of Cubans to the advancement of human rights for all, throughout the world.

38. Cuban solidarity has been present in activities ranging from support for the struggles against colonialism and apartheid on the African continent to the presence of thousands of civilian Cuban workers supporting development in various countries.

39. In keeping with its principles and in these difficult times marked by a pandemic, which has had devastating and multidimensional effects, Cuba has continued to support health systems in 59 countries on all continents.

40. Specialized health brigades have been sent to 41 countries, where Cuban health professionals have joined more than 28,000 Cuban workers who were already there prior to the pandemic.

III. Cooperation with human rights mechanisms

41. Cuba has a long record of cooperation with all human rights mechanisms that are applied on a universal and non-discriminatory basis and has consolidated a positive dialogue with the bodies established under international human rights treaties.

42. The country complies with its commitments and obligations under the 44 international human rights instruments to which it is a State party and demonstrates through concrete actions its unequivocal willingness to engage in respectful, frank and open dialogue.

43. In July 2023, the President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, had a fruitful meeting with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, during which the commitment of Cuba to the universal and non-discriminatory United Nations human rights mechanisms and to the universal periodic review was confirmed.

44. The country has made great efforts to honour its reporting obligations to the treaty bodies.

45. Cuba defended its initial report to the Committee on Enforced Disappearances in 2017; its combined nineteenth to twenty-first periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2018; and its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2019.

46. In addition, Cuba defended its periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee against Torture in 2022. It also submitted its national report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

47. Cuba is currently drafting national reports for other human rights treaty bodies, in line with its obligations in this area.
48. Cuba takes such exercises very seriously, given their usefulness as a platform for sharing experiences, viewpoints and lessons learned in the promotion and protection of all human rights for all.
49. The observations and recommendations made by the human rights treaty bodies in response to the reports presented by Cuba are carefully reviewed by the competent authorities.
50. In 2018, Cuba participated in the third cycle of the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council.
51. During the review process, Cuba presented its main results in that area and the future challenges, and described the progress made in implementing the recommendations accepted during the previous cycle.
52. Cuba also advocated, in a respectful dialogue and with strict adherence to the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity, respect for self-determination and the right of all peoples to decide on their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and development models, as the foundation for international cooperation in the field of human rights.
53. In keeping with its commitment to this universal mechanism, Cuba is working to implement the recommendations accepted during the third cycle and is preparing for the fourth cycle.
54. Cuba was one of the first countries to be visited by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, barely a year after the post was established.
55. It has also received visits from several special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, such as the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, both of whom visited Cuba in 2017.
56. In addition, in May 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights made an academic visit to Cuba. The Rapporteur had useful discussions with Cuban authorities, governmental institutions and civil society organizations. Of particular note was her meeting with the President of the Republic of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez.
57. Cuba has increased its cooperation with the human rights machinery of the United Nations through, for example, technical discussions with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on various topics, including the Cuban legislative process and other matters of common interest.
58. As part of its policy of cooperation with the human rights mechanisms, Cuba systematically complies with requests for information from the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council.
59. The country also maintains important cooperation links with various humanitarian and human rights organizations around the world, both in Cuba and abroad through international cooperation missions.
60. In addition, Cuba regularly discusses human rights issues at the bilateral level as part of its relations with other countries.
61. Since 2015, Cuba has engaged in an annual dialogue on human rights issues with the European Union, as part of the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its member States and Cuba.

62. In May 2023, the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child travelled to Cuba for the First International Congress on Childhood and Adolescence. During the visit, the expert was able to observe the country's progress and challenges in the promotion and protection of children's rights, and to hold discussions with Cuban authorities, governmental institutions and civil society organizations.

63. Cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been strengthened. In 2022, the eighth high-level dialogue between Cuba and ICRC took place in Havana.

IV. Voluntary pledges

- To continue to refine our economic and social development model and strengthen our legal and institutional framework for the protection and promotion of all human rights for all, guided by the new Constitution of the Republic.
- To continue to strengthen the legal and institutional framework in order to uphold people's right to full equality and ensure that all persons receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and enjoy the same freedoms and opportunities, without discrimination, as established by Cuban law.
- To continue to address any vestiges of discrimination in Cuban society, through the design and implementation of measures by territory and specific area.
- To continue to give priority to the care of persons with disabilities in Cuban social policy, to ensure increased quality of life and equal opportunities.
- To continue to create the conditions to strengthen food security for the entire population, in spite of the enormous obstacles in this area resulting from the unilateral blockade against Cuba.
- To continue to actively support consideration of the just historical demands of the peoples of the South and the rest of the world on such issues as the right to development, the rights to education and health, preventing and combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the right to food.
- To continue to champion full respect for the principles of universality, indivisibility, objectivity, non-politicization and non-selectivity in the consideration of human rights.
- To continue to advocate constructive and respectful dialogue and the strengthening of cooperation and technical assistance in the area of human rights, without external interference and with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries.
- To continue to promote and support human rights resolutions and mandates in areas such as the right to food, cultural rights, foreign debt, international solidarity and the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.
- To continue to promote opportunities for genuine interaction between Member States, civil society and other actors, such as the Social Forum, on the most pressing global problems that require a human rights approach, based on cooperation and dialogue.
- To continue to promote an approach based on cooperation and constructive dialogue in the work of the United Nations human rights machinery.
- To continue to honour the obligations under international instruments in this area.

- To prepare and defend national reports to different human rights treaty bodies, in accordance with the obligations assumed by Cuba in this area.
 - To continue working on implementing the recommendations accepted within the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, as a sign of commitment to this universal mechanism.
 - To continue to respond to requests for information from the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.
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