



# General Assembly

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## 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 8 August 2023 from the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

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

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

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

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



**Annex to the note verbale dated 8 August 2023 from  
the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to  
the United Nations addressed to the President of the  
General Assembly**

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

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

**I. Context**

1. For the first time, the Dominican Republic has presented its candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the period 2024–2026, reaffirming its commitment to respect and guarantee human rights and the mechanisms for their promotion and protection, in recognition of the fundamental role of the Human Rights Council.
2. With the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, multilateralism must be recognized as the only way to guarantee their realization. For this reason, the Dominican Republic advocates for renewed multilateralism, in which States strengthen their bonds of solidarity and cooperation for the full realization of these rights, ensuring human dignity through people-centred actions.
3. In this vein, article 38 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic states: “The dignity of human beings is sacred, innate and inviolable; its respect and protection constitute an essential responsibility of policymakers”.
4. The Dominican Republic is a social, democratic and legal State with its efforts rooted in human dignity and its fundamental character. In the interest of strengthening democratic systems, it promotes joint actions at the regional level, and for this purpose it has established strategic alliances with countries in the region, such as the Alliance for Development in Democracy.
5. Moreover, it focuses its efforts on supporting the freedom of the individual to live without fear, without misery, and with dignity, in a world that encourages the free development of personality for all individuals.

**II. An inside look: Dominican Republic**

6. Owing to its geographical location, the Dominican Republic serves as a historical bridge between the old and the new worlds and has also played a historical role in the fight for human rights. In December 1511, in the pulpit of the Dominican church in the city of Santo Domingo, Fray Antón de Montesinos delivered his landmark sermon condemning the brutality of the *encomienda* system and the deplorable conditions of the lives of Indigenous People under the domination of the colonial system. This condemnation was a milestone in a line of thought that became vital for the modern conception of human rights.
7. Historically, the country has prioritized the fight against violence in all its forms. Proof of this is the Dominican initiative to declare, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [54/134](#), 25 November the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in commemoration of the assassination of the Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva and María Teresa, who fought a fierce struggle for human

dignity and human rights against the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. The Government has made enormous efforts to document the atrocities committed during the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. For this purpose, in 2017 the General Archive of the Nation presented the Catalogue of Victims of the Trujillo Dictatorship, an extensive compilation of official documents intended to assist investigators and family members in identifying victims of the regime.

8. The Dominican Republic ensures compliance with due process while promoting public policies that guarantee the full development of its people. Its foreign policy is rooted in its Constitution, Organic Law No. 630-16 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institutional Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2021–2024), the 2030 National Development Strategy, which is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as in ratified treaties, international human rights standards and international law.

9. In accordance with the Constitution, the treaties, pacts and conventions related to human rights, signed and ratified, have constitutional hierarchy and are directly and immediately applied by the courts and other State bodies. In the same way, public authorities interpret and apply the norms related to fundamental rights and their guarantees in favour of the person entitled to these rights, and in case of conflict between fundamental rights they will endeavour to harmonize the assets and interests protected by the Constitution.

10. For this reason, the Dominican Republic has established within its strategic axes the promotion of democratic values and human rights, emphasizing it as a fundamental principle that plays a primary role for the Government while being crucial in the implementation of all public policies.

11. The Government's determined commitment to human rights has prompted the signature and ratification of the main pacts and conventions of the universal system of human rights and the inter-American human rights system, namely:

- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- The Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
- The Convention against Discrimination in Education.
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- The Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.
- The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 087).
- The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).
- The Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).
- The Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).
- The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).
- The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).
- The Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122).
- The American Convention on Human Rights.
- The Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights to Abolish the Death Penalty.
- The Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture.
- The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women.
- The Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities.

12. Likewise, the Dominican Republic remains vigilant on the constitutionality of the pacts and conventions pending ratification.

13. The Dominican Republic complies with the treaty bodies responsible for monitoring State compliance with the obligations contained in the different pacts, conventions, etc. Therefore, the Government regularly sends reports and analyses and incorporates general observations that help to improve interpretation of the regulations.

14. In this context, the Inter-Institutional Human Rights Commission was created in 2004, with the purpose of assisting and supporting the Government in all matters related to human rights, through the recommendations it deems appropriate to submit to the Executive Branch for its decision and especially in the preparation of periodic reports to the corresponding instances established by the pertinent international instruments. This Commission arranges an interministerial response to comply with the international commitments assumed by the country in the area of human rights.

15. In this regard, through a programme for technical cooperation between the Dominican Republic and Paraguay, the Dominican Republic has updated its monitoring system and recommendations on human rights, with the purpose of complying with the recommendations of the treaty bodies, rapporteurs and on the implementation of strategies for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. This mechanism provides a joint, systematic and transparent response to the progress achieved with respect to human rights.

16. The Dominican Republic maintains a cross-cutting policy in the Government system on human rights, to ensure that all public officials contribute to fulfilling the State's role in the provision of human rights and in the prevention of their violations. Further to this cross-cutting policy are: gender, climate change and territorial planning policies.

17. The Government created the role of the Ombudsman, whose objective is to safeguard the personal and collective prerogatives of citizens, embodied in the Constitution, in case they are violated by public administration officials. Likewise, the Ombudsman must ensure the proper functioning of public administration, so that it conforms to morality, laws, agreements, treaties, pacts and general principles of law.<sup>1</sup>

18. Another milestone reached in terms of access to justice and the protection of the rights of individuals relates to the transformations carried out in the judiciary, which have strengthened the independence of judges and transparency to reaffirm the fight against corruption and impunity. The Government also has a Public Defender's Office, which has made progress in achieving the executive and budgetary independence of public defenders, as an initiative that seeks to maintain the rule of law and access to justice for all people in an equal, effective and timely manner.

19. Regarding the rights of children and adolescents, the Government adopted a law<sup>2</sup> that prohibits child marriage. Moreover, it has also created the Cabinet for Children and Adolescents as a space for inter-institutional coordination of child and adolescent protection policies.

20. Likewise, the Dominican Republic is drafting a law on non-discrimination, and the Executive Branch has enacted a law that seeks full and effective protection and inclusion in society for people with autism spectrum disorder, through the protection and guarantees of their rights and the satisfaction of their needs.

21. Since 2018, the Government has had a National Human Rights Plan, through which the State seeks to comprehensively guarantee the rights of people in different spheres, by thematically organizing the focus of attention of those rights, through the implementation of 10 programmes that cover the protection of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and labour rights of populations in vulnerable situations and protect against discrimination.

22. The involvement of civil society and international organizations in the Plan is a milestone in the history of human rights in the Dominican Republic, being a national document that represents the commitments assumed by the Government.

23. Currently, as a result of the lessons learned from the Plan, work is being done on its extension and updating, so that public policies become a reflection of inclusive and participatory processes, with financial and human resources to guarantee their successful implementation.

24. The new structure of the Plan follows the guidelines proposed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the development of action plans for human rights. These guidelines are based on the need for a document that presents a situational analysis on human rights, and determines progress and challenges to be overcome, as well as priorities, paying special attention to groups in situations of vulnerability.

<sup>1</sup> Law No. 19-01 Establishing the Ombudsman.

<sup>2</sup> Law No. 1-21, which modifies and repeals several provisions of the Civil Code, and Law No. 659 of 1944, on Civil Status Acts. Law No. 1-21 prohibits marriage between persons under 18 years of age (G. O. No. 11004 of 12 January 2021).

25. The new structure of the Plan includes four strategic axes: civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights and the human right to the environment; the rights of groups in situations of vulnerability; and the implementation of international standards.

26. In turn, each axis has four strategic goals that promote a culture of human rights, actions to reinforce the regulatory framework, the strengthening of the institutional framework and the protection of human rights.

### **III. International commitment to human rights**

27. The Dominican Republic has a long history of commitment to the international human rights system. As a founding member of the United Nations, it contributed to the discussion of ideas and to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promoting the inclusion of the phrase “equal rights of men and women” in the Preamble. This represents, without a doubt, the beginning of an unequivocal and permanent commitment to gender equality.

28. The Dominican Republic reaffirms the need to address and to provide effective solutions to the issues of decent housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to non-discrimination; the joint commitment to effectively address and counteract the global drug problem from a human rights perspective; and the effects of foreign debt and other international obligations of States and their impact on the enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights.

29. The country supports draft resolutions and issues related to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the right to food, the human rights of the elderly, the human rights of young people, the human rights of people with disabilities, children’s rights, environment, climate change and human rights, and the human rights of Indigenous Peoples.

30. Similarly, the country welcomes initiatives to support human rights defenders, freedom of religion and belief, democracy and the rule of law, mitigate the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, eliminate of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as well as put an end to contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and similar forms of intolerance.

31. Within the framework of the Third Committee of the General Assembly and a foreign policy consistent with the principles and values of its Constitution, the Dominican Republic has supported the adoption of resolutions that address the human rights situation in specific countries.

32. The Dominican Republic is a member of the Group of Friends of the Convention against Torture Initiative, the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls, the Group of Friends of Older Persons, the Group of Friends for People with Disabilities, the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, among others.

33. The Dominican Republic supports and welcomes the mechanism of the universal periodic review, and since 2009, the country has been evaluated by the States parties on three occasions, providing valuable suggestions for improving the human rights situation. The Dominican Republic also participates in the universal periodic review of other countries, taking a constructive approach and recognizing the challenges and progress of the States, thus making objective recommendations.

34. By the recent signing of several agreements with the universal periodic review mechanism, the Dominican Republic continues to support the importance of this mechanism. It prioritizes concrete actions to put an end to misinformation, to promote non-discrimination and to combat hate speech, to promote equality and the strengthening of human rights, to promote the rights of women and girls, the abolition of the death penalty and the prevention and prohibition of torture, focusing particularly on vulnerable groups and those in need of special attention.

35. The Dominican Republic also collaborates with the special mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, considering these to be the key to promoting human rights and recognizing that they represent a substantial contribution to cooperation with other States in fulfilling their commitments under the international human rights instruments.

36. In this context, the Dominican Republic notes the recent visit of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and the support for the extension of the mandate of the special rapporteurs on: the sale, exploitation and sexual abuse of children; the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of expression and opinion, and on the situation of human rights defenders.

37. In view of the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Dominican Republic will continue to strengthen its participation in forums for discussion and coordination to advance the promotion and protection of the human rights of all people, without distinction of any kind.

#### **IV. National and international agenda**

38. Once it has joined the Council, the Dominican Republic will continue to raise its voice for the fulfilment of the characteristics of human rights – indivisibility, universality and interdependence – while recognizing that no country has a perfect record on human rights.

39. The Dominican Republic will continue its activism towards the respect for the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the promotion of dialogue between nations for the settlement of disputes, for equal rights and the self-determination of peoples, for the maintenance of international peace and security, and the achievement of sustainable development for all, through the following actions:

- (a) Implementing the action plan against human trafficking and smuggling;
- (b) Promoting and protecting human rights, as well as encouraging human rights education for all people;
- (c) Defending and promoting assertive climate action to address the climate change that is particularly affecting small island developing States;
- (d) Reaffirming the independence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in order to guarantee the achievement of its purposes;
- (e) Supporting the Human Rights Council in addressing human rights violations and defending the role of the Council as the most important forum for dialogue on these issues;
- (f) Implementing the National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity 2010–2030, to achieve effective equality between women and men, based on the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, the National Development Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals;

- (g) Promoting, protecting and defending human rights, through equitable and constructive dialogue in the development of international standards that guarantee the principles of equality and non-discrimination;
- (h) Implementing the Law against child marriage and the National Human Rights Plan 2018–2024;
- (i) Continuing actions to promote human rights for all, both in the country and before the international community, as well as encouraging support for the Council's actions, goals and guidelines;
- (j) Ensuring significant participation of the State in the promotion and defence of fundamental freedoms, working closely with national and international civil society organizations, through open and frank dialogue;
- (k) Reaffirming multilateralism as the ideal mechanism for cooperation among all States to promote and protect human rights;
- (l) Developing policies that contribute to strengthening the universal periodic review mechanism, making thoughtful and specific recommendations based on the proposals of the United Nations treaty bodies;
- (m) Strengthening the national implementation of human rights obligations, supporting human rights defenders;
- (n) Working to promote the abolition of forced labour, child marriage and the death penalty;
- (o) Continuing to implement administrative measures to combat all types of discrimination, promoting human rights through human rights education for all people;
- (p) Studying the international instruments that to date have not been ratified and/or, in other cases, are pending signing and ratification;
- (q) Working to improve the treatment of people in situations of human mobility, with an emphasis on solidarity, cooperation, responsibility and burden-sharing;
- (r) Advocating for the establishment of guarantees and protection of people in cyberspace, combating disinformation and fake news, and thus engaging in the consideration and evaluation of the implications for human rights of new technologies and artificial intelligence, as an evolving social reality;
- (s) Advocating for the right to development;
- (t) Promoting the right to enjoy economic, social and cultural rights, with an emphasis on special attention groups;
- (u) Acting, nationally and internationally, based on the country's commitment to preventing violence against women and girls.

## **V. Challenges**

40. While it is true that the Dominican Republic has strengthened its democratic governance over the past four decades, it is also true that there are still significant cultural and material challenges to achieving full respect for human rights. The realization of human rights is a commitment that requires continuous work. Social, technological, economic and cultural changes bring about new challenges for guaranteeing human rights, therefore, any State will always face significant challenges in this area.



41. For the Dominican Republic, the main human rights challenges are associated with achieving a culture of peace, respect for diversity and overcoming the dynamics of social exclusion.
42. Regarding the first challenge, the Dominican Republic has been able to considerably reduce the occurrence of violent crimes in the last two decades. For example, the homicide rate has dropped from 26.32 people per 100,000 inhabitants in 2005 to 11.9 people per the same number in 2022. However, there is a prevalence of violent crimes originating in social conflicts, which reflects the challenge of creating mechanisms to address these conflicts peacefully.
43. Likewise, the challenge of guaranteeing the highest level of respect and dignity to people in conflict with the law remains.
44. Being aware that the State must establish mechanisms for the prevention of all types of violence, as well as for promoting citizen security, the Dominican Republic is working to reform the national police and the professionalization of justice workers, through the schools of the Public Ministry, the national police and the judiciary.
45. Another challenge is to develop a culture of respect and tolerance for diversity that allows the full integration of all people, regardless, for example, of their origin, religious beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation or race.
46. The collapse in health systems and access to basic services due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has shown that today more than ever, the right to health care requires efficient and effective guarantees, and has put democratic systems around the world to the test. The Government also introduced universal health insurance, incorporating almost the entire population into the health insurance system. However, there are still significant gaps in access to quality health care, especially in terms of sexual and reproductive health care for vulnerable groups, such as women.
47. The human mobility crisis is a reality from which the Dominican Republic has not escaped. In this context, it is carrying out initiatives to strengthen the State's response to the migrant population.
48. Democracy can only be strengthened with more democracy. Hence, the Dominican Republic is fighting to strengthen the system of consequences in all State entities, through the fight against corruption and impunity.
49. The Government is working towards the establishment of a Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, which will strengthen the national network of human rights and judicial guarantees.
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