



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-fourth session

Agenda item 114 (c)

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

#### **Note verbale dated 1 October 2019 from the Permanent Mission of Mauritania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of the President of the General Assembly and has the honour to refer to the candidature of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to the Human Rights Council for the term 2020–2022, at the elections to be held on 16 October 2019 in New York.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania 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 Islamic Republic of Mauritania (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania 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 114 (c).



**Annex to the note verbale dated 1 October 2019 from the  
Permanent Mission of Mauritania to the United Nations addressed  
to the President of the General Assembly**

**Candidature of Mauritania to the Human Rights Council, 2020–2022**

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

**Introduction**

1. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania presents its candidacy to the Human Rights Council, for the period 2020–2022, as part of the election to be held during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly in October 2019. Mauritania has previously been a member State of the Human Rights Council, when elected for the period 2011–2013.

2. Determined to respect its constitutional mandate and the commitments it has made regarding the application of global human rights standards, Mauritania stresses the importance of its candidacy for the Human Rights Council.

3. Such candidacy is driven by a wide range of reasons, among which Mauritania's deepest conviction that human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent, that all human rights should be considered as being of equal importance, and that they should not be prioritized or privileged.

4. Mauritania also believes that human rights are an integral part of its civilizational and societal values.

5. In addition, Mauritania adheres to all the universal principles of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights. In this regard, it has made notable progress in recent years in promoting and protecting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as in strengthening the legal and institutional framework for human rights. Thus, improving the living conditions of detainees, preventing torture, fighting slavery practices and all other practices harmful to children, women and persons living with disabilities have all known significant achievements.

6. Furthermore, Mauritania has ratified all major international and regional conventions of human rights along with their main optional protocols (see enclosure). It has also established close links and nurtured fruitful dialogue with the supervisory bodies for the implementation of these conventions, through sincere collaboration with various United Nations, Arab and African committees. This is reflected in regular reporting and in positive and constructive behaviour towards the special procedures of international institutions.

7. Prior to exposing the voluntary pledges, the following is a brief showcase of the implementation by Mauritania of previous commitments at the international, regional and national levels.

**International and multilateral level**

8. Mauritania reaffirms the importance of the Human Rights Council's endeavour to promote dialogue and international cooperation for the improvement of the human rights situation in all countries. Not only was Mauritania a founding member of the Human Rights Council in 2006–2007 and elected for the 2011–2013 period, but it is also committed to pursue its active participation in the future work of the Council and promise to support it.

9. Mauritania believes that efforts to promote and protect human rights around the world must respect the principles that guided the establishment of the Human Rights Council that are based on objectivity, impartiality, non-politicization and non-selectivity. In this context, Mauritania continues to share with other countries its efforts to promote democracy and human rights at the regional and global levels.
10. It strives to strengthen the prevention mandate of the Human Rights Council through cooperation and dialogue, before the emergence of possible conflicts.
11. At the same time, it also plays an important role in preventing the possible politicization of human rights issues within the Human Rights Council and other United Nations bodies.
12. Mauritania has been through the universal periodic review cycle several times: in November 2010 and November 2015, and is preparing now for the third cycle of the universal periodic review in 2020.
13. Mauritania is convinced that the universal periodic review is an essential mechanism for improving the human rights situation in all United Nations Member States, without distinction. It appreciates the constructive contribution of the States participating in the universal periodic review dialogue and considers that it is important to follow up on the review's recommendations to support efforts aiming at ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights in all United Nations Member States, including Mauritania.
14. In addition to the universal periodic review, Mauritania submitted, in 2018, three reports to the treaty bodies on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, torture and the rights of the child. In 2019, Mauritania submitted its second report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
15. In terms of treaty bodies, Mauritania has one expert in each of the following international human rights treaty committees:
  - Human Rights Committee
  - Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
  - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
  - Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture
  - Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
16. It has also worked to advance the work of the Independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.
17. Furthermore, Mauritania has taken a variety of initiatives with multiple United Nations human rights mechanisms. It has invited a number of mandate holders under a special procedure and facilitated their visit, as was the case, in particular, of the following mandate holders:
  - The Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, in 2007
  - The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in January 2008
  - The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in February 2008
  - The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, in October 2009, 2012 and 2017
  - The Special Rapporteur on torture, in 2016

- The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, in 2016
- The Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, in October 2016
- In addition to the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, in 2011

18. Other visits were made by the International Labour Office (Department of Standards) and by members of treaty bodies such as the Human Rights Committee.

19. On these occasions, all national human rights actors had fruitful exchanges with these special procedures mandate holders.

20. Along with these efforts, the country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was established in Nouakchott on 9 December 2010. Since then, the office has regularly accompanied the Government's efforts, through technical assistance, to promote and protect human rights. Given its primary role, Mauritania intends to further strengthen cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to build a strong and mutually beneficial partnership.

#### **Regional and bilateral level**

21. In addition to its investment in maintaining peace and stability in the sub-Saharan region through the foundation of the G5 Sahel, Mauritania plays a leading role in the efforts to promote human rights and to address humanitarian issues in the subregion. It is, in particular, a driving force for strengthening the role of both the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Arab Commission for Human Rights in promoting democracy and fundamental freedoms and human rights. This commitment was translated by hosting the sixty-second ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights along with its preparatory forums that took place from 25 April to 9 May 2018, as well as the ratification of the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

22. Mauritania is also a member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

#### **National level**

23. Institutional reform in the field of human rights has led to the creation of several national bodies that cooperate closely with civil society organizations and international institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights. These bodies include: the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Humanitarian Action and Civil Society Relations, the Tadamoun National Agency for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery, Social Integration and Action to Fight Poverty and independent human rights institutions, established according to international standards, namely, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture.

24. All this has made it possible to offer the guarantees recommended for the protection of human rights.

25. As for combating the vestiges of slavery, the Government has implemented, in recent years, the Road Map for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery and its Contemporary Forms based upon the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery. The measures taken in this regard ranged from strengthening the legal framework regulating the practices of slavery, the organization of awareness campaigns and the implementation of several socioeconomic programmes targeting the affected social groups.

26. It also proceeded to the creation of special courts dedicated to the issues of slavery and the institutionalization of 6 March as a national day for fighting against slavery practices.

27. The Government has also carried out, in collaboration with the concerned partners, a comprehensive evaluation of all that has been achieved as part of the Road Map action plan.

28. Additionally, to strengthen national cohesion through the settlement of the *passif humanitaire*, the Government has implemented, with the assistance of the partners, the tripartite agreement under which was organized “operation voluntary return of refugees” from Senegal to the Mauritanian territory in conditions that are welcomed by the international community.

29. The Government also engaged in close consultation with the relatives of the victims, the opinion leaders and the ulamas, resulting in the settlement of this case, through the compensation of the victims’ parents, the reintegration of former officials and contracted agents of the State in their original departments as well as the benefits, where appropriate, from pension rights.

30. On the other hand, the Government and relevant civil society organizations continue to improve the quality and effectiveness of the normative framework governing human rights.

31. To further strengthen the capacity of State agents and stakeholders at the national and local levels, Mauritania has regularly implemented training and communication programmes on human rights obligations and commitments. These programmes target a variety of audiences, including government officials, law enforcement officers, students, teachers and local leaders, and address a variety of thematic issues, such as juvenile justice, fighting torture, trafficking in persons, citizenship and the rights of women and children. These initiatives reflect Mauritania’s holistic approach to the promotion and protection of human rights.

32. With regard to the promotion of women’s rights, Mauritania has taken various measures to increase women’s participation in decision-making, to improve maternal health and to end violence against women.

33. Concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Government attaches great importance to the participation of the non-governmental organizations representing persons with disabilities in all decision-making processes, especially in issues concerning them.

34. In Mauritania, freedom of expression is guaranteed by article 10 of the Constitution, relating to freedom of association and assembly, as well as by laws and regulations in force. In addition, freedom of the press, an essential element of democracy, is protected, and Mauritania is regularly presented as an example in this field, particularly in the Arab world.

35. Conscious of the burden of responsibility to shoulder once elected member State of the Human Rights Council, Mauritania is determined to continue to participate actively and constructively in promoting universal respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. In doing so, Mauritania takes the following pledges and commitments:

(a) At the international and multilateral level:

- Fulfil its international obligations and carry out the mandate and mission entrusted to this important institution by the General Assembly
- Defend the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, including the right to development

- Promote international cooperation to ensure that the efforts of United Nations organizations to achieve universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all contribute to the stability and well-being necessary for the establishment of peaceful and friendly relations among nations, for peace, for security and for socioeconomic development
  - Promote greater efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations human rights bodies, particularly the Council, which must continue to work in a transparent, fair and impartial manner while promoting meaningful dialogue, and focus on results
  - Continue to engage with United Nations human rights bodies, member and observer States and other stakeholders to further promote and protect human rights. Mauritania will also contribute to a better consideration of these rights in the work of the organs of the United Nations
  - Double its efforts to ensure that all human rights (civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development) are considered equally important in the work of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
  - Support and contribute to the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to promote and protect human rights in the member countries of the Organization
  - Work for greater involvement of civil society organizations in the actions of the Council's various mechanisms
  - Propose, through resolutions of the Human Rights Council, new avenues for cooperation between Governments and civil society, particularly with regard to the implementation of recommendations stemming from the Council's mechanisms (universal periodic review, special procedures, etc.)
- (b) At the regional and bilateral level:
- Continue to promote regional and bilateral cooperation to strengthen the capacity of Member States to fulfil their duty to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, taking into account the importance of national and regional particularities and the diversity of historical, cultural and religious contexts
  - Give more weight to the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Arab Commission on Human Rights, to ensure the promotion and protection of these rights in both spaces, as well as the work of other thematic commissions on human rights, such as those relating to the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children and persons with disabilities
  - Continue regional efforts to contribute to security and peacekeeping
- (c) At the national level:
- Build the capacities of the national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights in order to improve the quality of their work and their mechanism for sharing their experiences with relevant actors at the regional and global levels
  - Continue strengthening the human rights framework at all levels of national life
  - Be more effective in enforcing human rights laws and regulations, improving the level of coordination and synergy among government authorities,

strengthening legislative mechanisms and integrating human rights into all levels of the decision-making process

- Strengthen partnerships with all parties, including national human rights institutions and members of civil society, to better tackle the issues hindering the full enjoyment of human rights
- Continue to support the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mauritania
- Continue its efforts to harmonize national legislation with the provisions of ratified international conventions
- Respect the reporting deadlines under ratified conventions and implement accepted universal periodic review recommendations and treaty body recommendations
- Continue awareness-raising activities and the strict application of all laws relating to the promotion and protection of human rights

36. This aide-memoire demonstrates the strong commitment of the Mauritanian Government, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders in the country, to double its efforts in order to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights in Mauritania. The pursuit of the promotion and protection of human rights remains a priority for the country.

37. In this regard, the Government of Mauritania would greatly appreciate the support of the Government of the President of the General Assembly for the candidacy of Mauritania to the Human Rights Council, for the period 2020–2022.

## Enclosure

### Status of ratification by Mauritania of key international and regional human rights treaties and conventions

<i>Conventions</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>
<b>International conventions</b>	
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1988
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1991
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	2001
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	2004
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	2004
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	2004
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	2007
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	2007
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2010
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2012
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	2012
Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	2012
United Nations Convention against Corruption	
International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (30 November 1973)	1988
International Convention against Apartheid in Sports (10 November 1985)	1988
Slavery Convention (1926)	1986
Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (6 September 1956)	1986
Protocol amending the Slavery Convention (25 September 1962)	1986
Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (28 July 1951)	1987
Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (31 January 1967)	1987
Convention on the Political Rights of Women	1976
<b>Regional conventions</b>	
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	1986

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<i>Conventions</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	2005
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2005
African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	2008
Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	2005
Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa	1972
Arab Charter on Human Rights	2019

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