



General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 February 2019

Original: English

Seventy-fourth session

Item 116 (c) of the preliminary list*

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

Note verbale dated 8 February 2019 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and has the honour to refer to the candidature of the Republic of Korea for election to the Human Rights Council for the 2020–2022 term at the elections to be held during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly in New York in 2019 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations would like to request that the present note verbale and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

* [A/74/50](#).



**Annex to the note verbale dated 8 February 2019 from the
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

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

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

Introduction

1. The Republic of Korea has unique experience in improving its human rights situation in the process of democratization and economic development over the past decades. These achievements were made possible not only by the strong will of the Korean people to overcome crises, but also by close cooperation with the international community. Based on these valuable assets, the Republic of Korea would like to contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation around the world. The Republic of Korea would like to play an active role as a bridge in the Human Rights Council, particularly for the least developed countries. In this regard, the Republic of Korea has strengthened a people-centred approach to implementing development cooperation projects, with a focus on protecting and promoting the human rights situation and further supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. The Republic of Korea firmly upholds the universal value of human rights as a centrepiece of its policy goals. As a State party to seven core international human rights conventions, the Republic of Korea is earnestly striving to implement the provisions of the relevant conventions at the national level in cooperation with various stakeholders. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea has actively participated in the activities of the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, working closely with the international community for the protection and promotion of human rights around the world.

3. At the national level, the Republic of Korea has drawn up the third national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights, 2018–2022. The plan covers 272 human rights-related tasks and outlines the commitment of the Republic of Korea towards better human rights protection in line with its international human rights obligations.

**Contribution to international efforts to promote and protect
human rights and the development of national human
rights policies**

Women's rights

4. The Republic of Korea has continued to support and contribute to global efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. It has joined in sponsoring Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolutions on the elimination of violence and discrimination against women.

5. As regards international cooperation in promoting and protecting women's rights, the Republic of Korea has served as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women and has actively participated in discussions on the promotion of gender equality, the elimination of sexual violence and the empowerment of women, and has

shared its efforts and best practices. It has also been participating in the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) since the establishment of UN-Women in 2010.

6. The Republic of Korea drew up the second basic plan for gender equality policy, 2018–2022, as a comprehensive national plan for promoting gender equality. In addition, in 2017 the Republic of Korea established the plan for improving women’s representation in key public sectors, 2018–2022, and has already reached its target ratios in some sectors, including at the director level in central and local government agencies in 2018. It will continue its efforts to increase women’s participation in key decision-making processes in the public sector.

7. In the drafting, implementing and evaluating of its development cooperation projects, the Republic of Korea is expanding gender perspectives in its policies and projects. The Korea International Cooperation Agency set up the gender equality midterm strategy, 2016–2020, with a view to promoting gender equality and women’s dignity in society, and is seeking to contribute to the empowerment of women and the elevation of their status in developing countries. By employing this strategy, the Republic of Korea will contribute to international efforts to promote gender equality and sustainable development, in the spirit of equity and universality of the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. Regarding the women and peace and security agenda, the Republic of Korea has expressed its strong support for Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). In 2018, it established the second national action plan to implement that resolution and subsequent related resolutions.

9. The Republic of Korea launched an “Action with women and peace” initiative in June 2018 to contribute to international efforts to promote the women and peace and security agenda, including the elimination of sexual violence in conflict. Under this initiative, it will embark on projects to address the particular needs of women and girls in situations of conflict and post-conflict and will hold an annual international conference to discuss issues of critical importance under the women and peace and security agenda.

Children’s rights

10. The Republic of Korea has set a good example to the world with its transition from a recipient of assistance from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in the 1950s to a major donor today. The Republic of Korea is a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, contributing to UNICEF policymaking processes and projects for children in need. Moreover, the Republic of Korea has held annual bilateral meetings with UNICEF since 2004 and signed a framework agreement with UNICEF in 2009, paving the way towards strengthened international cooperation for the protection of children’s rights.

11. At the national level, the Republic of Korea strives to promote the rights of children. Its many accomplishments include withdrawing its reservation to article 21, paragraph (a), of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for the adoption of a new law; drawing up the first master plan for child policy, 2015–2019, which prioritized the best interests of children; and establishing the Child Rights Committee as an independent monitoring institute under the National Human Rights Commission of Korea.

12. Regarding its efforts to end child abuse, the Republic of Korea will promote the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment, etc. of Child Abuse Crimes, enacted in 2014, and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Countering Child Abuse, launched in 2015, will develop preventive measures through continuous consultation

and cooperation. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea will participate sincerely in the 2019 meeting with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to review the fifth and sixth national reports of the Republic of Korea on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Rights of persons with disabilities

13. The Republic of Korea assumed the presidency of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2015–2016. During its tenure, the Republic of Korea led efforts on General Assembly resolution [70/170](#), entitled “Towards the full realization of an inclusive and accessible United Nations for persons with disabilities,” and upgraded the Accessibility Centre at United Nations Headquarters in New York in 2016.

14. On the occasion of the Pyeongchang Paralympics in 2018, the Republic of Korea hosted an international forum on the rights of persons with disabilities. During the forum, participants from Governments, experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations discussed ways to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in society and share their experiences.

15. Striving to make society more inclusive for persons with disabilities, the Republic of Korea drew up the fifth comprehensive policy plan for persons with disabilities, 2018–2022. In implementing the plan, it will continue to be fully engaged with the international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Serving as Co-Chair with Antigua and Barbuda of the Steering Committee on Accessibility, the Republic of Korea will continue its efforts to enhance the accessibility of persons with disabilities at the United Nations in cooperation with the President of the General Assembly, the Secretariat, Member States and other stakeholders.

Rights of migrants and refugees

16. The Republic of Korea has contributed to global efforts for refugee protection since it joined the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2000. In 2016, it joined the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees “20+ million club,” an informal forum for donors who have contributed more than \$20 million to that organization. Moreover, the Republic of Korea has worked closely with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), including to support the implementation of the IOM private-sector partnership strategy, 2016–2020.

17. In 2013, the Republic of Korea enforced the stand-alone Refugee Act to enhance its expertise in refugee status determination procedures and to provide social care for refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, the Republic of Korea has been carrying out a pilot refugee resettlement programme since 2015. It has established the third basic plan for immigration policy and the third basic plan for multicultural family policy, both for the period 2018–2022.

18. The Republic of Korea joined the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and global compact on refugees in 2018 and seeks to continue its cooperation with related international organizations, Governments and other stakeholders including through participation in the Global Refugee Forum in 2019.

Democracy

19. As a core sponsor of resolutions on human rights, democracy and the rule of law and also on the role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights, the Republic of Korea is contributing to advancing democratic principles to

achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which acknowledges the importance of human rights, the rule of law, good governance, peace and security for achieving sustainable development.

20. The Republic of Korea will continue to promote and consolidate democracy by playing an active role in the work of the Community of Democracies, as a member of its Governing Council and Executive Board, and by supporting the United Nations Democracy Fund as a member of its Advisory Board.

Contribution to expanding the frontier of human rights issues

Local government and human rights

21. Since 2013, the Republic of Korea has led efforts on the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolutions on local government and human rights, in which local governments are encouraged to promote and protect human rights. The Republic of Korea held an intersessional panel discussion on that role, on the margins of the thirty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council in 2017, in order to share experiences and best practices of the human rights policy of local governments.

22. The Republic of Korea will continue to seek a more active role for local government in the promotion and protection of human rights, including by leading efforts with regard to the related resolutions on human rights. Along with central Government, local governments can play an important role in promoting human rights and further achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

New technology and human rights

23. To identify the human rights opportunities and challenges presented by the fourth industrial revolution and explore ways to respond to them, the Republic of Korea held a side event on new technology and human rights in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), on the margins of the thirty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council in 2018. The Republic of Korea also hosted an international forum on new technology and human rights in Seoul in December 2018, at which participants discussed the impact of new technology on human rights and the roles of international organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations as well as experts and related stakeholders.

24. The Republic of Korea will seek to expand the scope of human rights discussions in the Human Rights Council through various forums and resolutions on human rights issues that emerge with the advent of new technology.

Participation in human rights instruments and their implementation

25. The Republic of Korea has ratified and implemented the following seven fundamental international human rights treaties and their optional protocols: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

26. Following its pledges for election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2016–2018, the Republic of Korea withdrew its reservation to article 21,

paragraph (a), of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2018. It also ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2015.

27. The Republic of Korea has cooperated and worked closely with the human rights treaty bodies through the timely submission of national reports and the implementation of concluding observations. It will continue to cooperate with the treaty bodies, including during the upcoming review procedures, and will ensure full compliance with the human rights instruments to which the Republic of Korea is a party.

28. The Republic of Korea will seek to ratify additional human rights instruments and withdraw its reservations to human rights instruments in line with the recent advancement of human rights in the Republic of Korea, including legal amendments and institutional developments in a wide array of fields:

- Examining the possibility of becoming a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
- Examining the possibility of accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Considering the withdrawal of its reservations to article 16, paragraph (g), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and article 25, paragraph (e), of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Considering the ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption
- Considering the ratification of the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization

Contribution to the Human Rights Council

Full support for and active participation in the human rights mechanisms

29. The Republic of Korea was a member of the Human Rights Council at the time of its establishment in 2006 and was most recently elected for the term of 2016–2018. During its tenure, the Republic of Korea has been actively engaged in discussions on major human rights issues, ranging from the protection and promotion of vulnerable groups to country-specific human rights issues.

30. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Choi Kyong-lim, was elected as President of the Human Rights Council in 2016 and made significant contributions to the Council's discussions on improving its effectiveness and efficiency.

31. The Republic of Korea has steadily made contributions to the trust fund to support the participation of least developed countries and small island developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council.

32. The Republic of Korea extended a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures in 2008 and invited eight special procedures to visit the country between January 2016 and February 2019. The Republic of Korea held candid and constructive dialogues with special procedures, including in 2016 during the visit by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and by the Working Group on business and human rights, and in 2018 during the visit by the

Special Rapporteur on adequate housing. It also supported the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances for the holding of its 111th session in Seoul in 2017. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea has made financial contributions to the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures to support the collaborative activities of 56 special procedures. It will continue to cooperate with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council by rendering its full support for their visits.

33. The Republic of Korea will play an active role in human rights advocacy around the world by constructively participating in a wide range of discussions to promote all aspects of human rights. It will remain constructively engaged in the activities of the Human Rights Council and will support the fulfilment of its mandate and functions.

Constructive engagement in the universal periodic review

34. The Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the universal periodic review mechanism and has fully engaged in the entire review process in good faith. The Republic of Korea underwent the third universal periodic review in 2017 in an open and constructive manner, and actively participated in the session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.

35. The Republic of Korea conducted a review of the recommendations made during an interactive dialogue within the National Human Rights Policy Council. The recommendations accepted in the review process have been incorporated into the third national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights (2018–2022).

36. Moreover, for substantial improvement in the human rights situation of least developed countries, the Republic of Korea has contributed to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance and the voluntary trust fund for participation in the universal periodic review.

37. The Republic of Korea will remain firmly supportive of the universal periodic review and the collective efforts of the international community for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide through constructive engagement with the mechanism and dialogue with the States under review.

Cooperation with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

38. The Republic of Korea strongly supports and has made continuous contributions to the work of OHCHR, including its field-based structure in Seoul, and has been working closely with OHCHR on various issues, including new technology and human rights. Contributions by the Republic of Korea to OHCHR have increased more than sixfold over the past 10 years. In cooperation with OHCHR, it will continue to advocate for gender equality, child protection, democracy, good governance, the rule of law and fundamental human rights and freedoms.