



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-third session

Item 114 (d) 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 22 February 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat and, with reference to Italy's candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019–2021, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), has the honour to enclose herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Government of Italy to the promotion and protection of human rights (see annex).

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\* [A/73/50](#).



## **Annex to the note verbale dated 22 February 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

### **Candidature of Italy to the Human Rights Council, 2019–2021**

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

1. Having completed its second term, from 2011 to 2014, and having continued, to date, to remain engaged and committed as an observer member, Italy is proud to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the 2019–2021 period. Italy believes that the Council can be pivotal for crisis prevention and for providing a sustainable and just world for all, in the conviction that there cannot be long-lasting peace when human rights are not respected. In this spirit, its election to the Human Rights Council would enable Italy to contribute more actively to the Council's activities and play a key role in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.
2. The protection and promotion of human rights represents a firm and sustained priority of Italy's foreign policy. Italian action is based on the universality, objectivity and non-selectivity of human rights. Italy strongly believes that dialogue and cooperation among Member States can contribute to promoting and protecting human rights and that technical assistance and capacity-building are important tools for supporting Member States in complying with their obligations and in preventing human rights violations worldwide. Italy works actively to mainstream human rights into law, policy and practice and to expand the space for civil society.
3. Italian action for promoting and protecting human rights will support the integrated approach of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, food security, healthy lives and well-being for all and at fighting poverty.
4. Italy has ratified all major international conventions on the protection and promotion of human rights, including all major International Labour Organization conventions.
5. Italy actively promoted the establishment of the International Criminal Court in the belief that the cause of peace can be served only if those responsible for the most serious crimes having an international impact are prosecuted and brought to justice. Italy hosted in Rome, almost 20 years ago, the United Nations conference that led to the adoption of the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, which Italy signed immediately and ratified the following year. Italy strongly supports and promotes the Court and its crucial work and will continue to do so in the belief that no long-lasting peace is possible without justice.
6. At the regional level, Italy ratified the most important human rights treaties and fully recognizes the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.
7. Italy was considered under consecutive cycles of the universal periodic review and its mechanism, which it firmly supported.
8. Since the second cycle of the universal periodic review, in 2014, Italy has further enhanced the protection and promotion of human rights at the national level. A non-exhaustive list of achievements includes: withdrawing its two remaining

reservations to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; adopting its first national action plan on business and human rights in accordance with relevant 2011 United Nations guidelines; adopting its third national action plan on women and peace and security; adopting the decrees implementing the 2016 legislation on civil unions for same-sex couples; establishing a solidarity fund for victims of discrimination; launching the extraordinary national action plan against sexual and gender-based violence; establishing anti-violence centres and women's shelters; launching the first national action plan against trafficking and serious exploitation of human beings; reinforcing national measures for fostering interreligious dialogue; adopting a comprehensive legal framework concerning the protection of foreign unaccompanied minors; establishing the national authority for the protection of detainees' and prisoners' rights (national preventive mechanism); and introducing the crime of torture in its legal system.

9. Italy has an effective partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and fully cooperates with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, to which it has issued a standing invitation.

10. Italy submits in a timely and thorough manner its periodic reports to the treaty bodies of the United Nations on the implementation of its human rights obligations under international law.

11. In this framework, Italy will:

- Actively engage and work constructively within the Human Rights Council and other bodies and mechanisms that have been or will be established under it, taking into consideration the key role that human rights promotion and protection play in conflict prevention and in fostering long-term peaceful settlements of conflict
- Work with determination to further improve the effectiveness, including in the implementation phase, of the universal periodic review process, in which Italy has participated since its establishment, in a spirit of constructive dialogue
- Continue to support the activities and the work of the special procedures established by the Human Rights Council, including by fostering joint participation in interactive dialogues
- Continue to prevent and combat international crimes and impunity, including by taking concrete steps to ensure the accountability of perpetrators
- Continue to support initiatives for responding promptly to human rights emergencies
- Further promote human rights education and undertake awareness campaigns on the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Enhance the role of civil society, in particular in the formulation and implementation of human rights policy and programmes, including in the areas of early warning and prevention; support the participation of civil society organizations in the Human Rights Council; and establish new channels for collaboration and dialogue with civil society organizations

12. A sustained effort is needed to eradicate racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and all forms of discrimination, including when based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Italy maintains a firm and active stance in the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination, being actively involved in the main relevant international initiatives on the issue. The principle of

non-discrimination, in law and in practice, and the principle of dignity for everyone are at the heart of Italian foreign policy with respect to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The best way to combat discriminatory attitudes and behaviours is through the adoption and implementation of ad hoc laws, education and dialogue among cultures. Italy is part of the Equal Rights Coalition and actively supports all of its initiatives to promote and protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Italy is a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex core group in New York.

13. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue to support specific initiatives and resolutions presented to the Human Rights Council to prevent and combat racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and all forms of discrimination, including when based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Further promote ambitious educational programmes to help eradicate all forms of discrimination
- Further support the engagement of civil society organizations in the fight against all forms of discrimination
- Further prevent and combat the diffusion of hate speech, including online

14. The protection and promotion of women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment represent key priorities for Italy's international action, both in multilateral contexts and in its bilateral relations. Italy is party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and actively participates in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. Italy ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and continues to encourage its wider ratification. Italy strongly supports international campaigns for the eradication of harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, including by promoting and actively participating in the negotiations on related resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Italy supports international initiatives to prevent sexual violence in conflict and emergency situations and is part of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies.

15. Italy attaches great importance to ensuring the full and active participation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict and in post-conflict cooperation efforts, in keeping with the women and peace and security agenda of the Security Council. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2017, Italy launched the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network with the aim of increasing the participation of women in conflict prevention and mediation, a multi-year initiative that we hope will contribute to enhancing women's participation and capacity-building in such a critical field.

16. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue working with determination to prevent and combat violence against women in all its forms, including by implementing a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and by continuing its support for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and programmes related to women
- Actively support, together with other regional groups and countries, international campaigns for the eradication of harmful practices

- Undertake actions to empower women and girls and to advance their human rights and empowerment as a matter of priority and in line with the 2030 Agenda
- Ensure that humanitarian programming is gender responsive and in compliance with humanitarian policies on women's empowerment and women's rights

17. Italy attaches the utmost importance to the rights of children, especially those in situations of vulnerability, such as conflict and post-conflict contexts, and situations of poverty, underdevelopment and social tension. Italy ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (2016) and recognized the competence of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to receive and consider communications in which a State party claims that another State party is not fulfilling its obligations (see article 12 of the Protocol). Italy actively participates in the negotiations of the resolutions on the rights of the child adopted by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. During its presidency of the Security Council, in November 2017, Italy promoted the adoption of resolution [2388 \(2017\)](#) on trafficking in persons. The resolution contains a number of paragraphs aiming at the protection of children who are victims of trafficking, particularly those who are unaccompanied, in terms of identification, assistance, health care, education and exemption from detention. The promotion and protection of children's rights in armed conflict is also an integral part of Italy's international commitment to children's rights. Italy is a member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, which brings together States committed to advancing this issue at the United Nations. During its term of Security Council membership, Italy promoted the introduction of specific provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of United Nations peace operations.

18. In this framework, Italy will continue:

- To actively support international initiatives and programmes aimed at preventing and combating the involvement of children in armed conflict
- To prevent and combat child pornography, support child victims of violence, sexual abuse and trafficking and take all steps necessary to strengthen international cooperation for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible for acts involving the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography and child sex tourism, supporting the work of the competent special procedures and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children
- To promote initiatives aimed at fostering education for all children, adolescents and young people, enabling adolescents and young people to be agents of positive transformation
- To support initiatives and programmes to ensure the enjoyment by all children of their economic, social and cultural rights, without discrimination, contributing to the creation of a safe and enabling environment in which the well-being of the child is ensured

19. The universal moratorium of the death penalty is an important priority of the Italian Government. Italy is firmly convinced that the moratorium contributes to the enhancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Italy upholds respect for the rule of law, working with determination to develop effective crime prevention and response strategies, to promote increasingly effective and fair justice systems and to combat impunity, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, with particular attention to the rights of children in the justice system. Italian action can

count on the joint commitment of institutions and civil society and is inspired by an inclusive approach and a spirit of cooperation, dialogue, mutual respect and understanding.

20. In this framework, Italy will strengthen its efforts for the adoption of a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to its abolition and will support national-led initiatives and national debates on this issue.

21. Italy works with determination for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief and the protection of people belonging to religious minorities. Italy attaches great importance to the promotion of pluralism, inclusion and tolerance, as well as cross-cultural, cross-religious and interfaith dialogue. In the United Nations context, Italy supports initiatives for the engagement of religious leaders in the prevention of hate crime. Italy promotes humanitarian and development cooperation programmes to support religious and ethnic communities that are victims of sectarian violence.

22. In this framework, Italy will continue:

- To promote and support initiatives at the international and regional levels to combat religious intolerance and protect all people belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, identifying concrete measures for protecting victims of violence or discrimination
- To promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue
- To support the work of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief
- To work closely with the United Nations and other international organizations in order to strengthen the available analysis and assessment tools to identify in a timely and systematic manner the risk of atrocity crimes

23. Trafficking in persons is a serious human rights violation that can represent a crime against humanity and a concerning threat to international peace and security. Italy is actively committed to the fight against trafficking in human beings, as demonstrated by its actions to save thousands of lives in the Mediterranean Sea and by its strong support for the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. The Italian legal framework is victim centred, human rights oriented and gender and child sensitive, focusing on prevention, the legal protection of all victims and greater involvement of non-governmental organizations and local communities.

24. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue to support and pursue with determination initiatives to prevent and combat human trafficking in cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, including to promote the universal ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
- Continue to actively protect the victims of human trafficking at both the national and international levels, paying attention to those in vulnerable situations, such as women and children, including unaccompanied minors
- Promote with determination international law enforcement and judicial cooperation
- Support the activities of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children

25. Italy is committed to the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. Italy is party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto. The Italian Development Cooperation Agency is strongly engaged with the issue, which is mainstreamed in all of its initiatives, and contributes to the MoveAbility Foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Italy pays particular attention to the protection of persons with disabilities in emergency and post-conflict situations.

26. In this framework, Italy will:

- Further promote the rights of persons with disabilities, including by supporting the widest possible accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the implementation of its principles
- Develop and implement advocacy and awareness-raising programmes to enhance understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities

27. Cultural heritage is the bedrock of civilization, a testament to human identity, history and prosperity. The right of access to and enjoyment of cultural heritage is a human right guaranteed by international law. The destruction of any item of cultural heritage strikes a blow to the shared cultural heritage of humankind. Unfortunately, these fundamental values have been challenged over the years, with detrimental and irreversible consequences. The preservation of cultural and religious heritage, which is linked firmly to the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, is an important tool for safeguarding the historical and cultural identity of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, and therefore the enjoyment of cultural rights. The destruction of cultural and religious heritage, revealing a determination to eradicate all traces of diversity and different cultural and religious identities in a specific area, has a detrimental impact, including on the stability and pacific coexistence of different communities in that area. Protecting cultural and religious heritage is therefore key not only to protecting the rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, but also to fostering peace and stability.

28. Italy promotes initiatives aimed at preventing and countering conduct that destroys and damages cultural heritage and that provides important financial support to criminal and terrorist groups, such as Security Council resolution [2347 \(2017\)](#), unanimously adopted on 24 March 2017, on the protection of cultural heritage and the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict.

29. Italy will continue to work consistently to promote inclusivity, tolerance and respect for diversity.

30. In this framework, Italy will:

- Actively work, in concert with all other relevant international actors, to protect cultural heritage, with a view to promoting universal respect for cultural rights
- Support the activities of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

31. Human rights defenders play an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels by raising awareness on human rights issues and promoting higher standards of protection. Italy recognizes the importance of civil society, in the shared belief that a vibrant civil society contributes to democratic and pluralistic societies, stability and prosperity.

32. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue to actively support human rights defenders and step up its efforts against all forms of reprisal with a view to creating a safe and enabling environment in which human rights defenders can operate free from hindrance and insecurity
  - Support the activities of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders
  - Promote an ongoing open dialogue with civil society organizations active in the promotion and protection of human rights, involving them in the drafting of actions and policies through permanent consultative mechanisms
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