

Candidature of Bulgaria to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019–2021

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

1. The Republic of Bulgaria has presented its candidature to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) for the term 2019 - 2021, the elections for which will be held during the 73rd Session of United Nations General Assembly in New York in 2018.
2. Bulgaria strongly upholds the purposes and principles of the United Nations as enshrined in the UN Charter, which articulates a commitment to a universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind. Bulgaria is fully committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has adopted a wide range of legislative, institutional, policy and administrative measures to fulfil its national, regional and international obligations on human rights.
3. The Republic of Bulgaria is presenting its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the first time. Bulgaria pledges to strengthen Council membership and adhere to membership standards.
4. Bulgaria aims to applying objective, human rights-based criteria in addressing situations of concern and remains fully committed to further strengthening its fruitful cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and all international human rights mechanisms.
5. Building on our traditional active engagement with UN Human Rights bodies and the rich experience of successfully chairing the former UN Commission on Human Rights and the UNGA Third Committee, we endeavour to continue promoting a strong human rights-based approach in the work of UN.
6. Bulgaria strongly maintains the standpoint that all human rights are universal, unalienable, indivisible and interdependent, as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
7. The Republic of Bulgaria has ratified seven core international human rights instruments and is continuously engaged with timely reporting on their

implementation. Bulgaria is party also to the major human rights treaties at regional level and fully recognizes the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

8. In line with its longstanding commitment to promote and protect human rights for all and its consistent engagement and balanced position in international human rights fora, the Republic of Bulgaria makes the following pledges with regard to its candidature for the UN Human Rights Council:

I. On international level

9. Bulgaria will further support the work and independence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN human rights mechanisms, the Human Rights Council Special Procedures and the Human Rights mandate holders.
10. We endeavour to support initiatives aimed at strengthening the efficiency of the Human Rights Council, improving its methods of work and ensuring its effectiveness and transparency. Bulgaria is committed to promoting universal participation in the Human Rights Council. Making sure that the Council's work has a direct impact on the ground should be a prerogative for all of us.
11. Looking forward to the 2020 General Assembly review of the UN Human Rights Treaty Body System, Bulgaria will engage and support all efforts aimed at further strengthening the independence, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures.
12. Bulgaria will work for further strengthening the role of the Universal Periodic Review as an excellent and unique tool of peer review and sharing of good practices in the field of human rights, while also considering the remaining challenges after the first two full cycles of the Review.
13. Bulgaria will support common efforts to bring grave country-specific situations to the attention of the UN and will ensure that they are addressed in proper ways, demanding accountability and ending impunity.
14. Our actions for promoting and protecting human rights will also be framed within the integrated approach towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from a human right perspective.
15. The Republic of Bulgaria will encourage open discussions on all human rights-related topics with the participation of civil society and human rights defenders. Building on its term as Vice-Chair and Rapporteur of the Committee on NGOs of ECOSOC for the period 2011 - 2014 Bulgaria will continue to support the participation of civil society at the UN.
16. The protection, promotion and respect of the rights of the child is a key priority on Bulgaria's human rights agenda and will feature as an important aspect of its HRC membership. Bulgaria has contributed to the advancement of children's rights as Vice-President of UNICEF's Executive Board in 2014, and as a founder member and co-chair of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs at the UN.
17. Bulgaria will continue to support and actively participate in the elaboration of the resolutions on the rights of the child of the HRC and the Third Committee of the

GA, and will work to keep their consensual nature. We will aim to put special focus on inclusive education and early childhood development as equal access to education and health services is crucial for ensuring the realization of all the rights of the child. Considering the expertise we have acquired through our fruitful cooperation with IOM, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNICEF and NGOs, we will also pay particular attention to the rights of migrant children.

18. Building on Bulgaria's long-standing traditions in the field of equality between women and men, we intend to advance the efforts of the international community for achieving full gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the full realization of their human rights. Bulgaria will focus on actively sharing good practices on the equal participation of women in the political, economic and public life and in decision-making processes at all levels.
19. As President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2017-2018, Bulgaria contributes to strengthening the implementation of the Convention through a more inclusive and participatory approach involving persons with disabilities and their representative organization. Progressing from this successful experience, we will maintain and develop our active and constructive engagement with all initiatives to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities for their full participation in all aspects of life on an equal basis with others.
20. In a world of increasing threats to security, maintaining a tolerant society is a serious challenge. In line with Bulgaria's long-standing tradition of tolerance and acceptance, we will continue to work actively for the elimination all forms of discrimination and violence promoting the principles of equality and non-discrimination in all decisions and actions of the Council.
21. The Republic of Bulgaria puts special emphasis on the promotion of culture of peace, tolerance, understanding, pluralism, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, human rights education and respect for cultural diversity for forming positive attitudes towards persons belonging to different ethnic or religious communities.
22. Considering the modern-age challenges, trafficking in human beings and smuggling should be regarded as a grave violation of human rights with huge human, social and economic implications that requires a concerted global response. Bulgaria will advocate for addressing the root causes of trafficking, including poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, social exclusion, marginalization, etc.

II. On national level

23. The Republic of Bulgaria will continue to report regularly to the UN Treaty Bodies on the implementation of all human rights instruments, ratified by the country. We will also maintain an active dialogue and cooperation with the Human Rights mechanisms on individual complaints.
24. Bulgaria will also endeavour to enhance the national implementation of all human rights instruments and of the Treaty Bodies' recommendations, and will consider widening the scope of its international obligations.
25. Contemplating the third cycle of the UPR, the Republic of Bulgaria intends to submit a UPR mid-term review by the end of 2018.

26. Having issued a standing invitation since March 2001 to all special procedures mandate holders, Bulgaria will uphold it and will continue to offer them full cooperation.
27. The Republic of Bulgaria will continue to foster multilateral cooperation in the field of human rights further strengthening its collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the human rights mechanisms in the UN systems, as well as the regional human rights bodies.
28. We will focus on the following priority areas:
 - Advancing the broad inter-ministerial and public dialogue with all stakeholders, for the promotion and protection of the human rights of all persons residing in Bulgaria;
 - Promoting social, economic and cultural rights, attaching special attention to the protection of children and their rights, the advancement of gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups;
 - Strengthening the ethnic and religious tolerance, the freedom of speech and expression and the freedom of religion or belief;
 - Protection of the rights of migrants and refugees;
 - Taking targeted actions for enhancing the rule of law, democracy and good governance.
29. The Republic of Bulgaria will continue to involve effectively civil society representatives, social partners and other stakeholders in all human rights-related policy and decision-making processes at all levels.
30. Bulgaria will continue to support the human right-based approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
31. In the framework of respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, Bulgaria will strive to spread awareness for the need to increase the effectiveness of national legislation, policies and programmes in the field of human rights and strengthen the capacity of national human rights institutions to promote and protect human rights.