



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-sixth session

Item 118 (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 2 July 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Honduras to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of Honduras to the United Nations has the honour to report that the Government of the Republic of Honduras has decided to present the candidature of Honduras to the Human Rights Council for the term 2022–2024.

In this regard, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Honduras has the pleasure to transmit the voluntary pledges and commitments for the candidature of Honduras to the Human Rights Council for the term 2022–2024 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Honduras 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 118 (d).

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\* [A/76/50](#).



**Annex to the note verbale dated 2 July 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Honduras to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

**Candidature of Honduras to the Human Rights Council for the period 2022–2024**

**Voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#)**

1. Honduras wishes to contribute to promoting cooperation and dialogue within the Human Rights Council in order to promote and protect human rights, including the right to development, through constructive dialogue among States, taking into account their social and cultural contexts and their specific needs.

**I. Contribution of Honduras to the promotion and protection of human rights**

2. Honduras has a robust legal and policy framework that is based on the strictest international human rights standards. The Honduran Constitution enshrines a broad range of rights and guarantees grounded in the dignity of the human person, the preservation of which, according to the Constitution, is the ultimate purpose of the State.

3. In addition, the Honduran Constitution grants supra-legal regulatory status to all human rights treaties, which are incorporated into the Constitution as a constitutional body of law.

4. The national legal system provides for a broad charter of constitutional rights that incorporate international human rights law, jurisdictional guarantees such as the amparo process at the domestic level, the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights at the regional level and the Statute of the International Criminal Court at the global level.

5. Honduras also has institutions with constitutional status, such as the National Human Rights Commission, whose mandate is to protect human rights and guarantee rights and freedoms at the national level.

6. In addition, Honduras upholds the principle of universal justice for such serious human rights violations as genocide, crimes against humanity, torture, war crimes, trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation and enforced disappearance, among others.

7. Honduras has undergone significant changes in the last 30 years. Since 2010, it has taken on significant responsibilities in the area of human rights at the national and international levels. In order to fulfil the international obligations and commitments undertaken by Honduras at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, the first Public Policy and National Action Plan on Human Rights, for the period 2013–2022, were formulated and are being implemented, in line with the principles of equality, non-discrimination, harmonious cooperation and transparency in management. Those actions were taken in response to one of the recommendations arising from the first cycle of the universal periodic review and from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The implementation of that recommendation attests to the political will of the Government of Honduras.

8. The National Action Plan thus constitutes the national human rights agenda, which the Government of Honduras is implementing in conjunction with civil society organizations, thereby facilitating progress in the promotion and protection of human rights.

## **II. Collaboration with the Human Rights Council**

### *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

9. At the request of Honduras, an agreement was concluded to establish a country office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to support Government efforts to improve the human rights situation on the ground. Since transparency and accountability are fundamental principles that underlie the human rights policy of Honduras, the Government has given the Office a broad mandate based on cooperation in capacity building, strengthening local institutions and monitoring the human rights situation in the country. The Office submits an annual report on its activities and the human rights situation in Honduras to the Human Rights Council.

10. The country office has worked closely with a number of actors on various issues, including human rights defenders, capacity-building for public officials, the promotion of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the linking of international recommendations with the Public Policy on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. In the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, a mechanism for the protection of economic and social rights and cultural rights, recognized as the only one of its kind in the region, was created.

## **III. Interactive dialogues with Special Rapporteurs and working groups**

11. Since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, Honduras has actively participated in interactive dialogues with special procedure mandate holders, not only as a State under consideration, but also as a party with an interest in the human rights situation around the world, as the country has sponsored resolutions to establish and renew various mandates.

12. Transparency and cooperation are pillars of the policy of Honduras for promoting human rights at both the national and international levels. It has thus maintained an open invitation to all special procedure mandate holders and to regional mechanisms.

13. The openness of Honduras to the United Nations universalis evident in our open invitation to special procedures mandate holders, with five Special Rapporteurs and two working groups having visited the country in the last five years. As part of the COVID-19 response, virtual meetings were held with the recently appointed Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. In addition, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had conducted visits recently, an on-site visit and a virtual visit. Moreover, regular contributions continue to be made to the reports of the Special Rapporteurs and the Working Groups.

14. Honduras has also engaged in dialogue and follow-up to those visits and has received specific technical assistance on priority issues for the country from mandate holders such as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, while focusing on technical cooperation and capacity-building to address existing challenges.

15. Honduras wishes to highlight the formal request for assistance with developing a national action plan on business and human rights, which request was submitted to the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and

other business enterprises. Honduras is one of the nine pioneering countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that are developing national action plans.

16. As a signatory and party to the nine United Nations human rights treaties and the American Convention on Human Rights, Honduras has submitted all its initial and periodic reports, thereby reducing the historical (decade-old, in some cases) backlog and remaining on the list of 33 States, out of the 193 States that participate in the universal human rights system, that are up to date with their reports.

#### **IV. Universal periodic review**

17. Honduras recognizes the universal periodic review as the only universal mechanism for compliance and evaluation of the human rights situation in States. In early 2020, Honduras submitted its report for the third cycle. The report was presented in November of that year, and the outcome was adopted in March 2021 at the forty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council. Honduras accepted a total of 203 recommendations, and took note of 20.

18. Throughout the three cycles, Honduras has played an active role as a reviewing State, always working with its peers in a constructive spirit and leading by example. To that end, Honduras has maintained an objective and constructive collaborative relationship with civil society organizations in the States under review and has relied on their insights to provide a more complete and balanced perspective of the human rights situation in the countries under review.

#### **V. Monitoring and follow-up**

19. Honduras was recognized as the only country that has a permanent reporting mechanism and that is compliant with 17 of the 30 recommendations elaborated upon in the report on strengthening national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up.

20. Honduras put in place the System for the Monitoring of Recommendations of Honduras in compliance with the recommendation made by Paraguay in the second cycle of the universal periodic review. Honduras is the first country in the subregion and the fourth in Latin America and the Caribbean to establish that type of system.

21. The system is used to monitor and follow up on the implementation of the recommendations issued by the special procedures mechanisms of the United Nations and the inter-American human rights system.

22. Honduras recognizes and supports the vital role of civil society and human rights defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights. It will therefore continue to improve dialogue with civil society and to implement policies and measures to enhance the protection of vulnerable groups.

23. Honduras has actively participated in the Human Rights Council, promoting the rights of children and displaced persons, and it has been a member of the core groups that have drafted and introduced resolutions on early and forced child marriage; the rights of children; and the human rights of internally displaced persons. Similarly, as it is the belief of Honduras that cooperation and dialogue are key for promoting and protecting human rights, from multilateral forums to the field, the country is also a member of the core group drafting the resolution on technical cooperation.

24. In addition, since the Human Rights Council was founded, Honduras has actively supported initiatives in favour of non-discrimination; women's rights; the protection of human rights defenders; the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples; the protection of the rights of migrants; the protection of the rights of persons

with disabilities; freedom of religion and belief; freedom of opinion and expression; the protection of journalists; the prevention of genocide; economic, social and cultural rights; the prevention of trafficking in persons; the prevention of corruption and the rights to food, health and a healthy environment.

## VI. Human rights priorities

25. Honduras wishes to highlight the following measures that have been taken to strengthen the national human rights system:

(a) The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions recognized the National Commissioner for Human Rights as a national human rights institution with A status accreditation, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles);

(b) The National Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment was created;

(c) The Ministry was created in the Office of Human Rights. Honduras is one of the few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to be equipped with this type of institution;

(d) The Office of the Special Prosecutor for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Journalists, Social Communicators and Justice Officials was established;

(e) The Inter-Agency Commission to Combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking was established.

26. With regard to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, we wish to underscore that:

(a) Honduras recognizes that human, civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, are universal, interdependent and interrelated. Social peace is a prerequisite for the full exercise of those rights;

(b) In order to protect the right to life, Honduras has focused its efforts on reducing violence. The homicide rate of 86.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2012 had dropped to 37.57 per 100,000 inhabitants by 2020;

(c) The promotion of economic, social and cultural rights is a top priority for the Government of Honduras, which focuses its efforts on national social protection programmes. These programmes, which include Vida Mejor (Better Life), Alianza Corredor Seco (Dry Corridor Alliance) and Credimujer (Womencredit), have proven to help reduce gaps in education, health and nutrition, reaching more than 3 million Hondurans. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the natural disasters Eta and Iota have made it necessary to redouble those efforts, and additional initiatives to guarantee the rights of the affected population have been launched. Those initiatives include Honduras Solidaria (Honduras Solidarity), Honduras se Levanta (Honduras Rises Up), Agrocrédito 8.7 (Agrocredit 8.7), the National Service for Entrepreneurship and Small Business and the National Reconstruction and Sustainable Development Plan.

27. With regard to vulnerable groups, we highlight that:

(a) With a view to protecting human rights defenders, journalists, social communicators and justice officials, pursuant to the Act on the protection of human rights defenders, journalists, social communicators and justice officials, the national protection mechanism was established in 2015;

(b) To date, the national protection mechanism has successfully protected the lives of defenders, journalists, social communicators and justice operators, allowing them to carry out their human rights advocacy freely. That work has been recognized by the Government;

(c) With regard to women and girls, the National Institute for Women has been steadily strengthened through an increase of 101.4 per cent in its annual budget between 2016 and 2020 and the allocation of additional human resources in order to ensure that the rights of women and girls are protected;

(d) The second plan for gender equality and equity, for the period 2010–2022, continues to be implemented. Starting in 2015, the gender perspective has been incorporated into the general provisions of the budget each year. Resources have been allocated for measurement and reporting by applying the gender investment index, and public hearings have been held. Those actions were taken as affirmative action measures aimed at closing the discrimination gap between men and women;

(e) In August 2018, the Inter-Agency Commission to Monitor Investigations into Violent Deaths of Women and Femicide was established. The Commission is made up of representatives of State institutions and civil society organizations, and its aim is to strengthen the investigation and punishment of crimes against women, as well as accountability processes and inter-agency coordination;

(f) The presidential programme Ciudad Mujer (Women's City) was created as a platform of coordinated services whose purpose is to promote the autonomy and empowerment of Honduran women. The initiative was lauded by other countries during the universal periodic review. The Office of the Public Prosecutor has specialized comprehensive support units nationwide. The units provide personalized, specialized and comprehensive care in a single location to victims of gender-based violence and victims in vulnerable situations such as children; older adults; persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons;

(g) With regard to persons with disabilities, the Honduras para Todos (Honduras for All) programme was created with the aim of helping to establish a baseline to identify and provide information on persons with disabilities nationwide, enabling the authorities to make decisions that will create opportunities for them and foster their inclusion. The programme grants budgetary support to 55 civil society organizations, a public investment totalling 50.2 million lempiras. A new law on inclusive sustainable development for persons with disabilities has also been enacted;

(h) Honduras has begun to develop strategic actions to address the steady increase in the population of older adults. The National Policy on Ageing and Older Adults for the period 2021–2050 was adopted. Its aim is to create, as part of a rights-based approach, the health, sociopolitical, legal, environmental, economic, cultural and scientific conditions that are conducive to the comprehensive development of active and healthy ageing;

(i) With regard to children, as a good practice at the subregional level, Honduras has consolidated its Integrated System for the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Honduras as a management model based on coordination among the different branches of government and among the three territorial levels of government, namely, the national, departmental and municipal levels, including various sectors and representatives of civil society and private enterprise. The Integrated System propels the process of formulating national policy to protect the rights of children and adolescents;

(j) In the area of juvenile justice, the National Institute for the Care of Juvenile Offenders was created, which has sought to reduce overcrowding in

educational detention centres for juvenile offenders, with a focus on restorative justice based on non-custodial measures;

(k) With regard to indigenous and Afro-Honduran peoples, in 2015, the Public Policy against Racism and Racial Discrimination for the Comprehensive Development of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Peoples was adopted. Its overall aim is to facilitate the exercise by those groups of their human rights, while maintaining their identity and diversity;

(l) With regard to the victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, Honduras has led and is part of transnational, regional and global mechanisms for action on the issue of human trafficking. The services provided to victims are aimed at restoring their violated rights. Between 2014 and 2020, more than 789 victims have been rescued and have received care;

(m) With regard to migrants, the following actions have been taken:

- In order to safeguard the human rights of Hondurans abroad, the Office of the Deputy Minister for Consular and Migration Affairs was established within the Office of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
- The Migrant Task Force was established, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; the Ministry of Human Rights; the National Institute of Migration; the Directorate for Children, Adolescents and the Family; the National Registry Office and the Office of the Public Prosecutor.
- The Act on the protection of Honduran migrants and their families and its regulations were passed.
- Three support centres for returning migrants and two centres for the protection of Honduran migrants, one in Mexico and one in the United States of America, were established.
- Four support centres for migrants were established.
- A tracing bureau for missing migrants was established.
- The drafting of a national migration policy is under way.

(n) With regard to displaced persons, the leadership of Honduras on the issue of human displacement has been recognized internationally, as it has been the first country in the subregion to acknowledge the existence of the phenomenon, promoting such initiatives as the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework to address it. We also wish to highlight the following measures:

- Under the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework, the San Pedro Sula Declaration has been a contribution by the subregion to the global compact on refugees, which provides for robust protection of displaced persons and generally brings a human rights-based approach to international discussions of the subject.
- Honduras draws attention to the establishment of the Directorate of Care for Persons Internally Displaced by Violence, which provides protection to those persons. A draft law on preventing internal displacement and providing internally displaced persons with care and protection was formulated and submitted to the National Congress in 2019. The new Penal Code criminalizes internal displacement.
- The descriptive study of internal displacement in Honduras has been updated, making it possible to better understand the phenomenon in the

country and implement pilot programmes to assist displaced persons, based on reliable and accurate statistics.

(o) With regard to the protection of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual population, that population is already identified as a vulnerable group in the National Action Plan on Human Rights. Actions taken as a result of that approach include the introduction of Penal Code provisions that make it a criminal offence to refuse to perform a public service on account of the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person soliciting the service; and as a circumstance that aggravates criminal liability for committing an act of violence against a person on account of the person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Although there is still work to be done to promote the human rights of the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual persons, Honduras continues to take strategic legislative, public policy and capacity-building actions so that that population can fully enjoy its human rights and receive the protection it needs in order to prevent violations.

## **VII. Human rights pledges and commitments made by Honduras**

28. At the international level, Honduras pledges before the Human Rights Council to:

(a) Continue to work within the Human Rights Council to ensure that Member States cooperate effectively to strengthen the role of the special procedures mechanism as a preventive tool, by taking the following actions:

- Promoting the Human Rights Council as the United Nations body chiefly responsible for promoting and protecting human rights.
- Performing its duties responsibly, sharing experiences and good practices as a member of the Human Rights Council, providing direction, studying problems and giving guidance throughout the process of developing new international standards.

(b) Foster dialogue between the universal human rights system, with its special procedures, and the regional human rights systems, by taking the following actions:

- Promoting activities that foster cooperation and dialogue between the Human Rights Council and other bodies of the United Nations system and the regional human rights system in order to avoid duplication of effort and ensure that resources are used optimally.
- Promote human rights at the global level and encourage the development of more efficient indicators in order to enhance monitoring and discussion.
- Continue to promote the universalization of all human rights instruments as a fundamental step towards the full protection of human rights and promote overall compliance with those instruments at the global level.

29. At the national level, before the Human Rights Council, Honduras pledges to:

(a) Strengthen the national human rights system by taking the following actions:

- Continue to collaborate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country on strengthening the protection of the human rights of the Honduran population by helping the Government fulfil its international responsibilities and working closely with all key actors, including civil society and businesses.
- Protecting and strengthening human rights by adopting laws and international conventions and implementing policies to promote respect for human rights.



- Implement policies and programmes adopting a human rights-based approach in order to promote and protect human rights.
- Strengthen the national human rights system

(b) Maintain the promotion and protection of human rights as a Government priority by taking the following actions:

- As a country in the Latin American and Caribbean region, Honduras is a strong supporter of the regional human rights system and will continue to participate actively in regional and subregional human rights bodies, will implement the relevant regional treaties and will continue to ensure respect for and compliance with the judgments, decisions and friendly settlement agreements of the regional human rights system.
- Continuing to cooperate with the bodies established to monitor the implementation of the human rights treaties to which it is a party, in particular, by submitting the relevant national reports and implementing the observations and recommendations made by those bodies during their visits.
- Implementing the recommendations received as part of the universal periodic review and from the treaty bodies and continuing to follow up on them through the System for the Monitoring of Recommendations of Honduras.
- Providing the highest level of protection to human rights defenders, journalists, social communicators and justice operators, and ensuring the strengthening and effective functioning of the protection mechanism for human rights defenders and journalists by reinforcing its preventive approach.
- Continuing to strengthen the institutional framework for the investigation of violations committed against human rights defenders in a prompt and effective manner, while abiding by the highest human rights standards.
- Maintaining open dialogue and cooperation with civil society organizations in order to build more transparent, inclusive and effective processes.
- Continuing to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and apply a human rights-based approach to meeting the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Continuing to recognize that climate change and environmental damage are seriously jeopardizing the full enjoyment of human rights and continuing to acknowledge the work of environmental defenders and their contribution to the formulation of environmental strategies and development plans. In that regard, Honduras will promote the integration of a human rights approach into all local, national and international policies related to adaptation and mitigation in its response to the effects of climate change, further strengthening the rights-based approach to climate action.

30. Based on its experience of fighting to uphold respect for human rights, Honduras is presenting its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the first time, as a State committed to guaranteeing the promotion and protection of human rights, mainly on account of the progress it has made in that regard in recent years.