



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-eighth session

Item 116 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

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

### **Note verbale dated 17 August 2023 from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and has the honour to refer to the candidature of France to the Human Rights Council for the term 2024–2026, at the elections to be held on 10 October 2023 in New York.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of France has the honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments reaffirming that the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are a priority for France (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of France would be grateful to the Office of the President of the General Assembly if the present note and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 116 (c) of the provisional agenda.

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\* [A/78/150](#).



## **Annex to the note verbale dated 17 August 2023 from the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

### **Candidature of France to the Human Rights Council, 2024–2026**

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

1. The French Republic is pleased to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2024–2026, with elections scheduled to be held in New York in October 2023.

2. Building on the achievements of its 2021–2023 term, during which it was particularly active in promoting women’s rights, freedom of expression, the fight against impunity and support for human rights defenders, France has three key priorities in the context of this candidature:

(a) **Solidarity.** We are at the halfway point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015. At the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit, followed by the 2024 Summit of the Future, will provide forums at which to make an initial assessment. In the spirit of the Paris Agenda for People and the Planet, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that no one need choose between combating poverty and protecting the planet, and to guarantee access for all to food security, health and social protection, decent work, quality education and training, digital technologies and protection against climate change. We will encourage the Council to reaffirm the right to social security and promote an approach based on human rights, the rule of law, sustainable development and action to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, accelerating biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. We will advocate universal rules on the human rights obligations of companies;

(b) **Freedoms.** Everyone must be able to participate on an equal footing in civic, economic and social life, to express themselves, teach and think freely, and to have access to reliable and pluralistic information; civil society must be allowed to work without hindrance; and academic freedom must be upheld. Everyone must be entitled to a life free from invasion of privacy and discrimination. We will call for the universal decriminalization of homosexuality;

(c) **Justice.** Impunity and insecurity are conducive to abuse. Injustice is a barrier to reconciliation and development. We need to stand with victims of violence and abuse, in order to ensure truth and reparation for those victims. France will support the United Nations in its efforts to combat impunity and promote justice and reconciliation. We will work tirelessly to achieve the universal abolition of the death penalty.

3. Across all areas of our work, the role of women will be central. Their voice is essential in peace negotiations, on boards of directors and in all areas of social life.

## **I. To enhance solidarity, France pledges to:**

### **A. Promote human rights-based development and greater social resilience**

4. France promotes a human rights-based approach to development cooperation:
  - By adopting a human rights and development strategy in 2018, France became one of the first countries to conceive of its official development assistance not only as solidarity, but also as a tool to support the rule of law and individual freedoms, as well as the implementation of partner States' international obligations.
  - France has increased its official development assistance to 0.55 per cent of its gross national income. To support the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to create a new "social contract for education" worldwide, it took part in the Transforming Education Summit in 2022. In 2021, it co-initiated with UNESCO the adoption of the Paris Declaration, aimed at encouraging States to invest in education.
  - With the Tech for Good Call launched by the President of the Republic in 2018, France has enabled technology companies and non-governmental organizations to commit to designing development models that leverage digital technology to drive economic development, combat inequality and discrimination, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and preserve biodiversity.
  - France co-chairs Alliance 8.7, a global partnership aimed at eradicating child labour by 2025 and ending forced labour, modern slavery and trafficking in persons by 2030 (target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals).
5. As co-author of a resolution on extreme poverty submitted every three years, France will work to strengthen the Council's efforts to promote economic and social rights and international solidarity. It will support a political reaffirmation by the Council of everyone's right to social security, ahead of the World Social Summit announced by the Secretary-General for 2025. It will also lend its full support to the drafting of universal rules to ensure that companies contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, furthering human rights and safeguarding fair competition.

### **B. Protect the rights of people affected by climate change**

6. France has promoted political recognition of the right to a healthy environment. It chaired the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in 2015, at which the Paris Agreement was adopted, and co-organized the One Forest Summit with Gabon in 2023. In 2025, it will co-organize with Costa Rica the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. It contributes 6 billion euros each year to climate change adaptation investments.
7. France will ask the Council to organize a worldwide consultation with young people, scientists and businesses on how to better protect everyone's rights in the light of the impact of biodiversity loss and pollution on our living conditions.

## **II. To further freedoms, France pledges to:**

### **A. Promote women's equal participation in all public and private decision-making processes**

8. France, which upholds a feminist foreign policy with substantial resources and which co-organized the Generation Equality Forum with Mexico under the auspices of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), believes that the advent of fairer, more resilient societies will require a greater role for women (51 per cent of the global population) in decision-making processes.

9. It will support the call of the Secretary-General in Our Common Agenda “to place women and girls at the centre”, and will ask the Council to establish an index to monitor progress in this area.

### **B. Foster debate and enable civil society to take action**

10. France strongly believes that a pluralistic, well-informed, intergenerational and peaceful exchange of ideas helps to uphold the rule of law and prevent violence and external interference:

- It created the Partnership for Information and Democracy, supported by 51 States in all regions.
- Through its development assistance policy, France supports human rights defenders in their own countries and takes in those who are under threat. France provides them with tangible support, including financial assistance, through various programmes, including the Marianne Initiative for Human Rights Defenders, launched by the President of the Republic in 2021, which aims to host around 15 defenders each year to help them to develop specific projects. Support is also provided through the Franco-German Human Rights and Rule of Law Prize and the Simone Veil Prize of the French Republic for gender equality, established in 2016 and 2019 respectively.
- Through its official development assistance, France supports and champions the development of civil society organizations.
- Together with 73 partners from all regions, France launched an appeal for the protection of academic freedom in 2023.

11. France will request that young people have a dedicated forum for expression and participation at the Council.

### **C. Safeguard freedom from invasion of privacy or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and uphold the right to control one's own body.**

12. France has pledged to provide 400 million euros in support of sexual and reproductive health and rights over the period 2021–2025, and launched its second international strategy (2023–2027) on the subject on 8 March 2023. It promotes the right to legal and safe medical abortion. A member of the Equal Rights Coalition, which defends the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, France has appointed an ambassador to lead this fight.

13. France will continue to defend sexual and reproductive health and rights at the Council and will call for the universal decriminalization of homosexuality.

### **III. To further justice and stand with the victims of human rights violations, France pledges to:**

#### **A. Combat violence and seek justice for victims, both in times of peace and in times of conflict**

14. In 2007, France launched the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, which have been endorsed by 115 countries. It provides ongoing support for international criminal justice and the fight against impunity for those responsible for abuses. It stands alongside victims on the ground, particularly survivors of sexual violence, by funding projects run by the United Nations Population Fund and the Global Survivors Fund (for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence), co-founded by Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad. France is working for the universal adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). It has launched a declaration on the rights of the child in the digital environment, which calls for improved digital education and the development of child-friendly digital tools, as well as better protection of children from online threats. To this end, France has set up an international laboratory to protect children from the dangers they face online.

15. France will propose that the Council strengthen its efforts to promote reconciliation and transitional justice. This initiative will be coupled with a commitment to universal ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. To ensure that zero tolerance for violence against women is also a reality in the digital environment, France will propose that the Council take action to end online harassment and promote women's freedom of expression online.

16. Opposed to the death penalty everywhere and in all circumstances, France will continue to fight for its universal abolition, and will continue to work in the Council, with its partners, towards the adoption of ambitious resolutions in that regard. The momentum of the abolition movement, which new States are joining every year, demonstrates that there is no place in today's world for this unjust, inhumane and ineffective punishment.

#### **B. Combat racism, intolerance and hatred**

17. As part of a long tradition of tolerance and universalism that inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and as a steadfast promoter of an open, free, neutral, global, interoperable, reliable and secure Internet, France will continue to advocate universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It will also continue to work to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity or any other grounds.

18. France will propose that the Council make digital actors responsible by ensuring that they are accountable to Governments and users and that they combat hate speech, stereotypes and dangerous content.

#### **IV. France will continue to insist on transparency and accountability**

19. France has ratified the main international human rights instruments. In recent years, it has ratified:

- The International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), in 2023.
- The Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, in 2023.
- Protocol No. 16 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, enabling the Constitutional Council, the Council of State and the Court of Cassation to refer a dispute to the European Court of Human Rights for an opinion (2018).

20. France recognizes the competence of the committees responsible for monitoring compliance with the treaties it has ratified to receive individual complaints. France appeared before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in November 2022. In May 2023, it underwent the universal periodic review of the implementation of its obligations, having accepted and implemented almost all the recommendations addressed to it by its peers in January 2018. It appeared before the Committee on the Rights of the Child in May 2023 and will appear in the second half of 2023 before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Its engagement is illustrated by the fact that it was represented at the ministerial level both at the universal periodic review and before the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

21. In line with its commitment to promote and protect human rights, France has adopted several national action plans and international strategies:

- Interministerial plan for gender equality (2023–2027)
- International strategy on gender equality (2018–2022, currently being renewed)
- International strategy on sexual and reproductive health and rights (2023–2027)
- National plan to combat racism, anti-Semitism and discrimination based on origin (2023–2026)
- National action plan for equal rights, against hatred and discrimination towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons (2023–2026)
- Human rights and development strategy (2018, and an action plan for 2020–2024)
- National action plan to combat the exploitation of and trafficking in human beings (2019–2021, currently being renewed for the end of 2023)
- National child protection strategy (2020–2022, or “Pact for Children”)
- National action plan to implement the women and peace and security agenda (2021–2025)
- National plan to combat the prostitution of minors (2021)
- National strategy to accelerate the elimination of child labour, forced labour, trafficking in persons and contemporary slavery by 2030 (2021)
- Action plan to combat violence against children, focused on sexual violence (to be presented at the end of 2023): strategic policy document for civil society and civic engagement (2023–2027)

22. France has extended a standing invitation to United Nations special procedures to visit its territory. In that context, it is preparing to welcome the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

23. France has a national human rights institution that is in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

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