



# General Assembly

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## **Eightieth 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 14 May 2025 from the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the candidature of Estonia for election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2026–2028, at the elections to be held in October 2025 in New York.

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

The Permanent Mission of Estonia 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 116 (c) of the preliminary list.

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\* [A/80/50](#).



**Annex to the note verbale dated 14 May 2025 from the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

**Candidature of Estonia to the Human Rights Council, 2026–2028**

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

1. The promotion and protection of human rights is Estonia's national priority and an integral part of Estonia's foreign policy. Estonia underlines the importance of a multilateral world order with the United Nations and the Charter of the United Nations at its core, which is essential to the protection and promotion of human rights and for advancing democracy. It is a priority for the Government of Estonia both domestically and in the implementation of its foreign policy in all its aspects. Estonia's international efforts are aimed at strengthening security, development and human rights in the world. As a part of these efforts, Estonia is presenting its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2026–2028 in order to more actively contribute to the Council's work for the promotion of human rights. Previously, Estonia served as a member of the Human Rights Council from 2013 to 2015. During this period, Estonia focused on advancing gender equality and protecting and promoting the rights of women and children, the rights of Indigenous People as well as freedom of opinion and expression.

2. Estonia has always been an outspoken advocate of multilateralism and universal values. It upheld this commitment during its mandate as an elected member of the Security Council from 2020 to 2021 and as an elected member of the Human Rights Council from 2013 to 2015.

3. Estonia supports the human rights institutions of the United Nations and the mainstreaming of human rights into all United Nations activities. Estonia is firmly committed to the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other key covenants adopted. Estonia will continue to fully support the Human Rights Council and the mechanisms and tools at its disposal. Estonia believes that the Human Rights Council continues to be the best tool to advance all human rights and to address human rights violations and abuses as well as to seek accountability. Estonia believes that the Human Rights Council should be able to respond, in a timely and responsible manner, to all urgent human rights violations, but also to advance and develop a universal human rights agenda.

4. Estonia will continue to support the functioning of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and has issued a standing invitation to all United Nations special procedures. It has regularly received visits from several rapporteurs and has always responded positively to communications and follow-up on recommendations. Estonia highly values the opportunities for Member States and other stakeholders to contribute to and benefit from the work and findings of the special procedures and mandate holders.

5. Estonia is committed to actively engaging in the United Nations human rights system, including sessions of the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly. Estonian experts have served in various United Nations expert groups and bodies, i.e. through current membership in the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as Co-Chair of the High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession and of the High-level Steering Group for Every Woman, Every Child, and as a member of the Leadership Panel of the Internet Governance Forum.

Estonia was the Vice-President of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly and the President of the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNICEF in 2016.

6. Estonia has ratified the most important international human rights instruments and advocates the full implementation of said conventions and agreements. National processes to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure have been initiated.

7. Estonia participates actively in the universal periodic review and was examined in this framework in 2021. Estonia has undertaken a coordinated effort to implement the recommendations and voluntary commitments accepted within the framework of this procedure and has submitted mid-term review reports. Estonia considers the universal periodic review an excellent tool in the promotion and protection of human rights and will continue to be actively involved in the universal periodic review debates.

8. Estonia pledges to continue to submit regular reports on implementing the human rights instruments and maintain and promote the system for distributing the conclusions and recommendations made by the treaty bodies and special procedures to the relevant authorities, non-governmental organizations and the general public in Estonia.

9. As a member of the Council of Europe, Estonia is a Party to several regional human rights treaties and subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

10. Despite being a small country with a population of 1.3 million, Estonia contributes regularly to an increasing number of United Nations programmes and various other funds aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, including OHCHR, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples, the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Global Media Defence Fund, the International Fund for Public Interest Media, the Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. In addition to regular donations, Estonia has made targeted contributions in support of victims of specific humanitarian crises with a focus on people in the most vulnerable situations, including children and women. Estonia is also firmly committed to the mandate of OHCHR and believes its work to be fundamental for the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. In line with that commitment, Estonia's voluntary financial support to OHCHR has been consistent. Estonia's voluntary contribution to OHCHR amounts to \$83,000. It pledges to continue to support the crucial activities of OHCHR.

11. Estonia recognizes the inherent dignity of every person and everyone's right to the full enjoyment of all human rights without discrimination. Estonia's transparent e-governance and close cooperation with civil society presents it internationally as an example of open governance and contributes to the implementation of human rights.

In addition to its own digital success story, Estonia continues to advocate and support other countries in their transitioning towards a strong digital society.

12. The role of, and collaboration with, civil society are an integral element of the promotion and protection of human rights both nationally and internationally. The Chancellor of Justice, who fulfils the functions of the national human rights institution, and non-governmental organizations, including many women's rights organizations, play a vital part in Estonian society.

13. Estonia's human rights diplomacy has been consistent and stayed on a similar course for decades, focusing on advancing gender equality, protecting the rights of women and children, freedom of expression, Internet freedom and digital inclusion, upholding the principles of independent civil society, the rule of law and democracy, as well as on promoting accountability and fighting impunity. The accountability of the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole should be ensured as these grave crimes threaten the peace, security and well-being of the world. Estonia highly values the role of the International Criminal Court in ensuring effective prosecution for atrocity crimes.

14. In line with its commitment to effective multilateralism and universal values and to an international system based on the rule of law, Estonia presents the following voluntary pledges.

## Article I

### **Estonia pledges to stand up for a stronger multilateral human rights system**

- Estonia pledges to continue to push for the effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights across the entire United Nations system.
- Estonia pledges to cooperate with all States to promote and protect human rights for all. It highly values open and honest communication and dialogue.
- Estonia pledges to support the Human Rights Council in addressing country-specific situations and violations of human rights. It will work to uphold the role of the Council as a forum for dialogue on thematic human rights issues.
- Estonia pledges to support the independence of OHCHR. It is committed to strengthening and supporting the human rights treaty body system and the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.
- Estonia pledges to continue its voluntary contribution to OHCHR and to advocate sustainable and predictable financing for United Nations human rights mechanisms.
- Estonia pledges to continue its efforts to safeguard the effective functioning of the universal periodic review process and to support efforts to strengthen national implementation and follow-up to its recommendations.
- Estonia pledges to continuously uphold the principles of open and independent civil society, encourage active civic engagement, stand for transparent policymaking and enhance civil discourse among different stakeholders and levels of governance.

## Article II

### **Protection and promotion of children's rights**

- Estonia pledges to continue to protect and promote the rights of the child in all international forums.

- Estonia pledges to continue to support initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against children, in particular efforts aimed at eliminating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and harmful practices.
- Estonia pledges to uphold international law to protect the rights of children living in situations of war and conflict, including to ensure the continuity of safe education during armed conflict.
- Estonia pledges to intensify the concerted efforts to protect the rights of the child in the digital environment.
- Estonia pledges to support the right to access to equitable and inclusive education, with a particular focus on girls.
- Estonia pledges to promote the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes.
- Estonia pledges to support the work of special procedure mandate holders dealing with the rights of the child, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF and United Nations Girls' Education Initiative.
- The Government of Estonia is committed to continuing to implement its juvenile justice system in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Article III**

#### **Enhancing digital rights**

- Estonia pledges to advance the development of human rights standards in the field of new and emerging technologies, promoting a human rights-based vision for digitalization and advocating democratic principles and the rule of law.
- Estonia pledges to support an inclusive, open, safe, secure and human-centric digital future for all.
- Estonia pledges to promote and protect the principle that the same rights that people have offline are also protected online.
- Estonia pledges to support the development of a common digital society that relies on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Estonia pledges to support initiatives that bridge the digital divide by enhancing inclusive policies, investment and the digital skills of all women and girls, as well as persons with disabilities.
- Estonia pledges to push for stronger and systematic cooperation across stakeholders to remove barriers to the full participation of girls and women in the digital sphere. It pledges to address the risk of discrimination and bias in the functioning and effect of artificial intelligence systems, as well as improving gender balance in all activities related to artificial intelligence.
- Estonia pledges to advance open, inclusive, multi-stakeholder, transparent and accountable Internet governance and promote Internet freedom.
- Estonia pledges to encourage responsible corporate behaviour in respecting human rights, including user data and privacy and fulfilling human rights due diligence, including in the digital context.

## Article IV

### Upholding media freedom

- Estonia pledges to protect and promote freedom of expression, media freedom online and offline, access to information and to combat censorship.
- Estonia pledges to protect and promote, both online and offline, the right to privacy, the right to assembly and association, the right to political and public participation, fair trial and non-discrimination.
- Estonia pledges to protect and promote the rights of human rights defenders, journalists, media workers and other actors of civil society to ensure a safe and enabling environment and to enhance their enjoyment of all human rights freely without harassment or reprisals.
- Estonia pledges to continue its support to independent media outlets and access to pluralistic information.
- Estonia pledges to continue to tackle the spreading of disinformation, expose malicious influence activities and improve the level of media literacy to enhance media freedom.
- Estonia pledges to continue focusing on countering hate speech and gender-based violence online and offline.

## Article V

### Gender equality and the empowerment of women

- Estonia pledges to advance gender equality and the enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls and to strengthen gender mainstreaming in United Nations policies and programmes.
- Estonia pledges to contribute actively to the elimination of all forms of discrimination, violence, including harmful practices, and harassment of women and girls, both offline and online.
- Estonia pledges to actively engage men and boys in promoting gender equality and to promote the engagement of men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls.
- Estonia pledges to promote women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making processes.
- Estonia pledges to advocate women's economic empowerment, closing the gender pay gap and promoting gender equality in household and caregiving responsibilities.
- Estonia pledges to continue supporting and engaging with all relevant stakeholders in the advancement and promotion of respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting access to non-discriminatory and comprehensive sexuality education to improve the well-being of adolescents.
- Estonia pledges to support all initiatives within the United Nations system that address issues of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity.
- Estonia pledges to continue to support the mandate of UN-Women and the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.
- Estonia pledges to remain strongly committed to implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

- Estonia remains devoted to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the 2030 Agenda.
- Estonia pledges to continue promoting the dissemination, use and application of the voluntary guidelines on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security in 2023.
- Estonia pledges to remain committed to allocating financial support to UN-Women, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, UNFPA and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs of the United Nations.

## **Article VI**

### **Human rights-based climate action**

- Estonia pledges to strengthen the linkage between climate change and respecting, promoting and considering human rights obligations as stipulated in the preamble of the Paris Agreement.
- Estonia pledges to promote increased public awareness and participation in environmental decision-making as a means to empower individuals and communities to positively impact their environment and contribute to sustainable development.
- Estonia pledges to prioritize gender equality in green transition and improve women's opportunities to participate in clean technology projects, while integrating and incorporating human rights considerations in domestic climate change-related legislation.

## **Article VII**

### **Accountability and effective prosecution for the most serious international crimes**

- Estonia pledges to continue to work actively towards ending impunity for the most serious crimes under international law and to address the situation of victims and survivors of such crimes.
- Estonia pledges to ratify amendments to article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- Estonia pledges to continue to provide expertise and financial support to the International Criminal Court, the Office of the Prosecutor, the Special Fund for Security and the Trust Fund for Victims.
- Estonia pledges to support the work and mandate of the International Criminal Court in ensuring the prosecution of perpetrators of atrocity crimes and bringing justice to victims.

#### **Estonia pledges to stand up for:**

- Stepping up international, regional and national efforts against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
- Supporting and promoting the right to adequate food in the context of food security.
- Advancing the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledging that safe drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights.

- Enhancing the rights of persons with disabilities and working to ensure their participation at all levels, in public and private life, and in activities of societies on an equal basis with others.
- Promoting the right to freedom of religion and belief, protecting the right to change religion or beliefs and the right to have no religion.
- Contributing to the work of the Equal Rights Coalition and strengthening cooperation between countries in advancing LGBTIQA+ rights.
- Promoting the worldwide abolition of the death penalty.
- Supporting and promoting the rights of Indigenous Peoples in all regions of the world.
- Protecting the rights of persons belonging to minorities in accordance with the applicable international norms and standards.

Estonia regards the Human Rights Council as a fundamental cornerstone of the multilateral system and would be honoured to serve as its member with the objective of strengthening respect for universal human rights for all.

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