

# Candidature of Iceland to the Human Rights Council

for the term 2025-2027

## VOLUNTARY PLEDGES AND COMMITMENTS PURSUANT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251

Iceland's candidature for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the term 2025-2027 reflects its firm commitment to promoting and protecting human rights for everyone, everywhere, and at all times. Given the unique status of the Human Rights Council as the preeminent multilateral forum dedicated to the advancement of human rights, Iceland attaches great importance to the Council's mandate and engages actively and constructively in its work.

Iceland fully accepts the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelatedness of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and key human rights treaties. No one should be denied human rights on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity. Iceland also recognizes that the three pillars of the United Nations – peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights – are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Respecting and protecting human rights and fulfilling human rights obligations is a crucial commitment which Iceland takes seriously. Human rights are ensured by the Constitution of Iceland and reflected in national legislation. The Government of Iceland pursues an inclusive approach to the promotion and protection of human rights, including through consultations and cooperation across Government, with the public and private sectors, and with civil society organizations and youth representatives.

This inclusive approach has been well reflected in Iceland's human rights treaty body reviews and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as well as during its membership of the Human Rights Council in 2018-2019. If re-elected, Iceland's membership of the Human Rights Council will be guided by the same approach.

Iceland has ratified seven core United Nations (UN) human rights treaties and recognizes the competence of respective human rights treaty bodies to review the human rights situation in Iceland. Iceland is also a party to the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as several other regional human rights treaties, and is subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

In 2018, Iceland ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) and the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) in 2019. Iceland also acceded to the UN Conventions on Statelessness in 2021.

Human rights are a key pillar of Iceland's foreign policy. Iceland actively participates in multilateral fora, including the UN, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to promote and protect human rights and address human rights violations and abuses.

Human rights are likewise an essential pillar of Iceland's international development partnerships, as reflected in Iceland's Policy for International Development Cooperation for 2024-2028, which is guided by a human rights-based approach.

Iceland has played an active role in enhancing the effectiveness of the UN human rights treaty bodies. Since 2016, Iceland has led the Core Group on the resolution addressing the human rights treaty body system at the General Assembly.

Iceland supports the independence of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as well as its unique and indispensable mandate. Reflecting this, Iceland has more than doubled its multi-year core contribution to OHCHR for the period 2024-2028.

Iceland would be honoured to serve as a member of the Human Rights Council. As a member, Iceland would do its utmost to meet the highest standards of human rights domestically as well as to promote and protect human rights worldwide.

In this spirit, Iceland presents the following commitments and pledges, which are centered around six main themes:

## **ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT**

- Iceland will focus on strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights, nationally and internationally, guided by the fundamental principles of equal and inalienable rights of all human beings.
- Iceland will engage in open and constructive dialogue with all members of the Human Rights Council, recognizing that the Council draws strength from its diversity.
- Iceland will stand up for those whose rights are under threat or violated, whether by infringement, discrimination, or deprivation and encourage all UN Member States to fulfil their human rights obligations.
- Iceland will promote the engagement of and collaboration with civil society, human rights defenders, youth, and other stakeholders in the work of the Human Rights Council and will likewise emphasize the importance of protection against reprisals.
- Iceland will support the work and rights of human rights defenders and pledges to promote and protect freedoms of opinion and expression and peaceful assembly and association, as well as freedom of the media and safety of journalists.
- Iceland will work to enhance the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to enjoy life free from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, as well as the importance of living independently.
- Iceland will work to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the

Human Rights Council to enable it to fulfil its mandate of promoting and protecting the enjoyment and full realization of human rights for all.

- Iceland will continue its full support of the UPR process, including by making specific and implementable recommendations in all UPR sessions.
- Iceland will support universal participation in the UPR through predictable contributions to the UN Voluntary Fund for Participation in the UPR and the UN Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance for the Implementation of the UPR.
- Iceland will promote, protect, and respect the independence of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the OHCHR and actively advocate for predictable and substantive voluntary contributions to the Office.
- Iceland will support meaningful coordination and mainstreaming of human rights across the UN system and cooperate fully with the special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies and protect and promote their independence.

## **ACCELERATING PROGRESS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS**

- Iceland will remain steadfast in its commitment to advancing human rights of women and girls, recognizing the structural inequalities and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination women and girls face.
- Iceland will work collaboratively across all regions and fora towards zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment.
- Iceland will continue to work towards achieving equal pay for work of equal value and equality in the labour market, both nationally and internationally.
- Iceland will continue to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education.
- Iceland will promote the engagement of men and boys to advance gender equality for the benefit of all.
- Iceland will be a strong proponent of the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda based on an updated National Action Plan to be adopted in 2024.

## **UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

- Iceland will actively promote the rights of children, guided by the fundamental principle that every child has the right to grow and prosper to adulthood in education, health, peace, and dignity.
- Iceland will advocate for placing the rights of children at the centre of all policymaking and contribute to securing the realization of their rights

worldwide.

- Iceland will advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence against children, in particular, the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as of harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child, early, and forced marriage.
- Iceland will promote a child-friendly, interdisciplinary, and multiagency approach to service systems for children that have been exposed to traumatic experiences to ensure appropriate support.
- Iceland will advocate for active and meaningful participation of children in policy and decision-making processes.

### **FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LGBTQI+ PERSONS**

- Iceland will continue to advocate for, promote, and advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.
- Iceland will work to address the increased discrimination, violence and hatred LGBTQI+ persons face worldwide.
- Iceland will support the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as the UN Free and Equal campaign.
- Iceland will contribute to the work of international coalitions focused on advancing human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.

### **ADDRESSING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

- Iceland will remain steadfast in its support for collective and concrete actions in response to the negative effects climate change and environmental degradation can have on the enjoyment of human rights worldwide.
- Iceland will contribute to the international discourse on the link between the environment and human rights.

### **ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS IN ICELAND**

- Iceland will uphold the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelatedness of human rights in its national policies and interventions.
- Iceland will continuously work towards ensuring that national laws and policies comply with international human rights standards as new challenges to human rights continue to arise.
- Iceland will establish a strong, independent, and effective national human rights institution in full accordance with the Paris Principles.
- Iceland will continue to mainstream human rights across the Government, including through the interministerial steering committee

established in 2017, which serves as the national mechanism for reporting, as well as following up on international and regional human rights reviews and engagements.

- Iceland will enhance dialogue with civil society organizations on human rights issues and challenges by engaging in open consultations on proposed legislation as well as preparation of submissions to the human rights treaty bodies.
- Iceland will continue to actively participate in the UPR process, to respond to recommendations received and to issue a mid-term report by the end of 2025.
- Iceland will continue to extend a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council and to react within the specified time limit to urgent appeals and communications.
- Iceland will ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED).
- Iceland will directly incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) into Icelandic law.
- Iceland will ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- Iceland will continue to integrate human rights education as a cross-curricular part of school culture and working methods across all education levels, in accordance with the National Curriculum Guide.
- Iceland is firmly committed to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and continues to participate in the voluntary national review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Iceland continues to be guided by a human rights-based approach in its development cooperation, focusing in particular on advancing the human rights of women and girls and fighting any discrimination and violence they may face.