

## Elections | Human Rights Council Pledging Events 2019

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**Last week in New York and Geneva, twelve candidate States publicly spoke to their pledges as an incoming Human Rights Council member for 2020 - 2022. They also faced questions on pressing human rights issues.**



Dialogue between civil society and States is instrumental for the advancement of human rights. The Pledging Events, organised each year by ISHR and Amnesty International, provide a critical opportunity for civil society to directly and constructively engage with candidate States for the Human Rights Council, the chief UN body addressing human rights violations.

The events aim to enhance transparency and accountability in Human Rights Council elections and improve adherence to Council membership standards. Toward these goals, candidate States were asked questions from the audience and Twitter using the hashtag #HRCpledging.

### **States committed to transparency and dialogue**

Twelve out of sixteen candidate States participated: Armenia, Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Republic of Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, and the Republic of Korea.

Libya, Sudan and Venezuela declined to attend, and there is still one unannounced candidate for the African Group. The decision not to participate is particularly disappointing, and suggests a lack of willingness on the part of these States to prioritize transparency and dialogue.

All candidate States were asked how they would uphold the highest standards of the promotion and protection of human rights. They emphasised their commitment to the universality and interdependence of human rights, facilitating civil society engagement and cooperation with the Council's mechanisms. Some States highlighted in particular their commitments to promoting gender equality, LGBTIQ rights, combatting racial discrimination, rights of indigenous peoples, protection of human rights defenders, among others.

Some States, particularly Brazil, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Moldova and the Netherlands emphasised the importance of dialogue and multilateralism in dealing with human rights issues, stating that they see cooperation between States and civil society as crucial in the protection and promotion of human rights.

Candidate States were asked questions from the audience and Twitter. Some of the questions and comments included:

- **Armenia** affirmed that violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation is unacceptable, and committed to work with stakeholders to uphold rights of LGBTI persons.
- **Brazil** stated that they have established a national body to prevent and combat torture whilst highlighting its significant engagement with Special Procedures and civil society, stating that it has had the highest number of visits by UN experts of any State, and is expecting three visits this year.
- **Germany** was asked about its trade relationship with China considering China's human rights record and said that they are engaged in dialogue both behind closed doors and in public with China to achieve constructive solutions for the protection of human rights.
- **Indonesia** aimed to continue in its efforts to push Myanmar to create the safe conditions required for the return of the Rohingya people. They highlighted that Indonesia's priority is to improve the humanitarian and human rights situation of the Rohingya people and that that it could only be done with constructive engagement and cooperation from Myanmar.
- **Iraq** highlighted their commitment to increasing the meaningful participation of women within the political sphere and that membership to the Council would help them to further this.
- **Japan** outlined its commitment to accept refugee applicants and to make decisions based on the Refugee Convention.

- **Marshall Islands** reflected the urgent need to address climate change and to link this with the need to promote and protect human rights.
- **Mauritania** stated that they aim to work closely with OHCHR and especially prioritise the rights of the child. They also mentioned that they consider civil society organisations are imperative in the promotion and protection of human rights.
- **Netherlands** aims to protect human rights defenders and speak out against reprisals and protect civil society space.
- **Poland** highlighted their commitment to provide sexual education in accordance with Polish national law with the guiding principle that the parents' right to provide sexual education should be safeguarded. They also outlined their intention to not vote against any Council resolution aimed at preventing mass atrocities.
- **Republic of Korea** highlighted the importance of punishing perpetrators of racial discrimination and to protect the victims through state institutions.
- **Republic of Moldova** claimed to be the first State in their region to approve legislation on sexual health and reproductive rights, committed to uphold the highest standards in the protection of the right to education and approved laws to facilitate the work of civil society.

The events had the generous sponsorship of the Bahamas, Denmark, Fiji and the Czech Republic, and were moderated by Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, in New York, and Peggy Hicks, Director of Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in Geneva.

For more information concerning the upcoming Human Rights Council election and to view ISHR [scorecards](#), which offer a quick, objective comparison of the human rights situation of candidate States.

You can watch the New York event on [UNwebcast TV here](#).

The Geneva event is available here (see below) and on ISHR [YouTube channel](#).

Photos of the discussions can be found on our [Facebook page](#).

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