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

Note verbale dated 9 May 2022 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the candidature of the Republic of Korea to the Human Rights Council for the term 2023–2025 at the elections to be held during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly in New York in October 2022.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [60/251](#), the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea 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 the Republic of Korea (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations 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 item 117 (c) of the preliminary list.

* [A/77/50](#).



Annex to the note verbale dated 9 May 2022 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the Republic of Korea to the Human Rights Council, 2023–2025

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

I. Introduction

1. The Republic of Korea firmly upholds the universal value of human rights, envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations, as the centrepiece of its policy goals. Having served faithfully as a member of the Human Rights Council for five terms, the Republic of Korea is strongly committed to promoting and undertaking a human-rights-based approach in its priorities, such as the protection and promotion of human rights, especially for those in vulnerable situations, including women and girls; emphasis on the interdependence between peace and security, development, and human rights as mutually reinforcing elements; and the integration of newly emerging issues facing humans and the global society at large into the work of the Council.

2. The Republic of Korea underscores the importance of prioritizing human rights in all sectors, especially against the backdrop of new challenges, such as climate change, the advancement of digital technologies and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its recovery process. These challenges should be constructively and proactively addressed in the discourse of the Human Rights Council, along with other United Nations mechanisms, in close collaboration with civil society.

3. The Republic of Korea, on the basis of its experience of achieving democratization and economic development over the last decades, firmly believes that the protection and promotion of human rights should be an integral part of a country's development path. In this regard, the Republic of Korea has been sharing its relevant experiences, knowledge and lessons learned while providing development assistance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

II. Contributions to the Human Rights Council

A. Full support for and active participation in human rights mechanisms

4. The Republic of Korea has been a member of the Human Rights Council five times since its establishment in 2006 and was most recently elected for the 2020–2022 term. During its tenure, the Republic of Korea has been actively engaged in discussions on major human rights issues, ranging from protecting and promoting vulnerable groups to country-specific human rights issues. In 2016, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office at Geneva was elected President of the Council, making significant contributions to discussions on enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council.

5. The Republic of Korea has been making an effort to play a leading role in dealing with emerging human rights issues, including new and emerging digital technologies and human rights, and local government and human rights.

6. In order to support the participation of least developed countries and small island developing States in the Human Rights Council, the Republic of Korea has steadily made contributions to the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the Work of the Human Rights Council.

7. The Republic of Korea extended a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures in 2008. Owing to travel constraints on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, the special procedures could not visit the Republic of Korea in 2020 or 2021. Nevertheless, the Republic of Korea has held candid and constructive dialogues with the special procedures through various channels, including faithful responses to their correspondence. It will continue to cooperate with the special procedures by rendering its full support for their visits.

8. The Republic of Korea will play an active role in human rights advocacy worldwide by constructively participating in a wide range of discussions, promoting all aspects of human rights, remaining constructively engaged in the activities of the Human Rights Council and supporting the fulfilment of its mandate and functions.

B. Constructive engagement in the universal periodic review

9. The Republic of Korea places great importance on the universal periodic review mechanism and has fully engaged itself in the entire review process in good faith. It underwent the third universal periodic review in an open and constructive manner in 2017.

10. The Government and civil society groups exchanged opinions to review the recommendations from the constructive dialogue in the universal periodic review. The recommendations accepted in the review process are incorporated into the third national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights, 2018–2022.

11. The Republic of Korea will continue to firmly support the collective efforts of the international community to promote and protect human rights through constructive engagement in the universal periodic review and dialogue with the States under review.

C. Cooperation with Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

12. The Republic of Korea strongly supports the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and has committed itself to continuous contributions to OHCHR, including the field-based structure in Seoul. It has been working closely with OHCHR on various issues, including new and emerging digital technologies and human rights. Its financial contributions to OHCHR have increased about sixfold over the last decade. In cooperation with OHCHR, the Republic of Korea will continue to advocate gender equality, child protection, democracy, good governance, the rule of law and fundamental human rights and freedom.

III. Contribution to international efforts to promote and protect human rights and the development of national human rights policies

A. Women's rights

13. The Republic of Korea has continued to support and contribute to global efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. It has co-sponsored resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on the

elimination of sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls, especially in vulnerable situations.

14. As for international cooperation in promoting and protecting women's rights, the Republic of Korea has served as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, shared its efforts and best practices and actively participated in discussions on the promotion of gender equality, the protection of the rights of women and girls, the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence, and the empowerment of women and girls. It has also served on the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) since its establishment in 2010.

15. In particular, the Republic of Korea has emphasized the women and peace and security agenda. It launched the "Action with women and peace initiative" in 2018 to contribute to international efforts to promote the women and peace and security agenda, including the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. Under this initiative, the Republic of Korea embarked on projects to address the particular needs of women and girls in conflict situations and held annual international conferences to discuss issues of critical importance under the agenda. In 2021, the third conference was held in Seoul on the theme "Strengthening women's roles and leadership in building and sustaining peace, with the survivor-centred approach."

16. Regarding the women and peace and security agenda, the Republic of Korea has expressed its strong support for Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). In 2021, it established the third national action plan to implement the resolution on women and peace and security, and implemented it with a whole-of-government approach.

17. The Republic of Korea has also developed the basic plan for gender equality policy every five years as a comprehensive national plan for promoting gender equality. The latest one is the second basic plan, 2018–2022. In addition, in 2017, the Republic of Korea established the plan for improving women's representation in key public sectors, 2018–2022. The Republic of Korea will continue its efforts to increase women's participation in key decision-making processes in the public sector.

18. In drafting, implementing and evaluating its development cooperation projects, the Republic of Korea has been expanding gender perspectives in policies and projects. The Korea International Cooperation Agency set up the midterm strategy for gender equality, 2021–2025, with a vision to promote gender equality and women's dignity, and is trying to contribute to the empowerment of women and the elevation of their status in developing countries. By employing this strategy, the Republic of Korea will contribute to international efforts to promote gender equality and sustainable development, in the spirit of equity and universality of the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Children's rights

19. The Republic of Korea has set an example to the world with its transition from a recipient of assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the 1950s to a major donor today. It is a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, contributing to UNICEF's policymaking process and projects for children in need. Moreover, it has held annual bilateral meetings with UNICEF since 2004 and signed a framework agreement with UNICEF in 2009, paving the way for strengthened international cooperation to protect children's rights.

20. At the national level, the Republic of Korea has strived to promote the rights of children. The Republic of Korea has achieved many accomplishments, including, but not limited to: withdrawing the reservation to article 21, paragraph (a), of the

Convention on the Rights of the Child by legislating a new adoption law and formulating the second master plan for child policy, 2020–2024, to minimize the negative impacts of COVID-19 on children. The Republic of Korea is also operating the National Centre for the Rights of the Child as an independent monitoring institute under the National Human Rights Commission of Korea.

21. As for child abuse, the Republic of Korea will promote the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment, etc. of Child Abuse Crimes, enacted in 2014. In 2021, in order to promote the rights of children, the Republic of Korea prohibited physically disciplining children, which was one of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child contained in the concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Republic of Korea. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea will submit its seventh periodic report on the implementation of the Convention in 2024 and continue to make efforts to promote children's rights.

C. Rights of persons with disabilities

22. The Republic of Korea has been committed to putting much effort into upholding the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, actively engaging in discussions on the Convention and focusing on assisting persons with disabilities, including during the outbreak of pandemics. It will consistently ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in the policymaking process and push forward with regard to cooperation with various stakeholders to create an inclusive society where persons with disabilities could live independently.

23. The Republic of Korea views the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a vehicle that will effectively guarantee the fulfilment of obligations under the Convention through the introduction of the petition filing system for individuals and groups. Accordingly, the Republic of Korea has improved national institutional frameworks to ratify the Optional Protocol by consolidating domestic ordinances, such as the Act on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, Remedy against Infringement of Their Rights, etc. and the Act on Guarantee of Rights of and Support for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. The ratification of the Optional Protocol is expected to strengthen the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

24. The Republic of Korea has been implementing the fifth comprehensive policy plan for persons with disabilities, 2018–2022, having started with the first plan, in 1998, as a long-term national programme to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The Republic of Korea endeavours to improve disability welfare institutions through communication and cooperation with persons with disabilities and their organizations by abolishing the disability rating system, promoting the enactment of the act on strengthening and ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities, announcing the road map for independent living of de-institutionalized persons with disabilities, and expanding the limit of support to reduce the burden of caring for children with disabilities. It will actively implement the World Programme of Action to fulfil its purpose, through pan-ministerial and pan-regional cooperation for opportunity equalization, social participation, rehabilitation and protection for persons with disabilities.

D. Rights of migrants and refugees

25. The Republic of Korea has contributed to global efforts for refugee protection since it joined the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2000. In 2016, it joined the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees “20+ million club”, an informal forum for donors who contributed more than \$20 million to that organization. Moreover, it has

worked closely with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), including to support the implementation of the IOM private-sector partnership strategy, and its four-year rotating membership in the IOM Council Bureau, from the 113th session (2022), with a coordinating role in the IOM Asia-Pacific group.

26. The Republic of Korea has been carrying out a pilot refugee resettlement programme since 2015. In addition, it has established the third basic plan for immigration policy and the third basic plan for multicultural family policy, both for the period 2018–2022. It will prepare an updated policy when the current version expires.

27. The Republic of Korea joined the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees in 2018 and is faithfully implementing the pledges made at the first Global Refugee Forum, in 2019. Achievements were introduced at the high-level officials meeting in 2021.

IV. Contribution to expanding the frontier of human rights issues

A. Local government and human rights

28. Given their proximity to people and first-hand knowledge of communities, local governments are well positioned to promote social inclusion and ensure that no one is left behind. Since 2013, the Republic of Korea has led the biennial adoption of the Human Rights Council resolutions on local government and human rights, to encourage the role of local governments in promoting and protect human rights. In its resolution [45/7](#), adopted at its forty-fifth session, in 2020, the Council, acknowledged the essential role of local governments in ensuring a human-rights-compliant response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Local governments are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response and recovery, with their capacity to take decisive actions to protect and promote the human rights of their residents. On the margins of the forty-eighth session of the Council, in 2021, the Republic of Korea, in close cooperation with a core group and OHCHR, held a side event on the role of local government in ensuring human rights in the post-pandemic recovery.

29. The Republic of Korea will continue its efforts to seek a more active role for local government in the promotion and protection of human rights by leading a follow-up resolution on local government and human rights at the fifty-first session of the Human Rights Council, in 2022.

B. New and emerging digital technologies and human rights

30. To identify human rights opportunities and challenges stemming from the fourth industrial revolution and new and emerging digital technologies, and explore ways to respond to them, the Republic of Korea led the adoption of a Human Rights Council resolution on new and emerging digital technologies and human rights at the forty-first and forty-seventh sessions of the Council. It has also held various side events on new and emerging digital technologies and human rights in cooperation with OHCHR and various stakeholders, including civil society and technology companies, on the margins of sessions of the Council and the General Assembly, starting in 2018.

31. The Republic of Korea supports the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation and actively participated in discussions on its implementation as a champion of round table 3A/B on digital human rights, together with the European Union, OHCHR and AccessNow, in 2020.

32. The Republic of Korea will seek to expand the scope of human rights discussions in the Human Rights Council through various forums and resolutions on emerging human rights issues resulting from the spread of new technologies. The

Republic of Korea will keep engaging constructively in relevant international discussions and endeavours to promote a human-rights-based approach to new and emerging digital technologies.

V. Participation in human rights instruments and their implementation

33. The Republic of Korea has ratified and implemented the following seven fundamental international human rights treaties and their optional protocols: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

34. Following its pledges for election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2020–2022, the Republic of Korea withdrew its reservation to article 21, paragraph (a), of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2021. In 2021, it also ratified three fundamental International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions: the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). In addition, the Republic of Korea has begun domestic procedures to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

35. The Republic of Korea has cooperated and worked closely with the human rights treaty bodies through the timely submission of national reports and the implementation of concluding observations. It will continue to cooperate with the treaty bodies, including during the upcoming review procedures, and will ensure full compliance with the human rights instruments to which it is a party.

36. The Republic of Korea will seek to ratify additional human rights instruments and withdraw reservations made to the human rights instruments in line with the recent advancement of human rights in the Republic of Korea, including legal amendments and institutional developments in a wide array of fields:

(a) Examining the possibility of accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

(b) Considering the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;

(c) Considering the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

(d) Considering the withdrawal of its reservations to article 16, paragraph (g), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(e) Considering the ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption;

(f) Considering the ratification of the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the last fundamental ILO convention to which the Republic of Korea is not a party.