

The Netherlands' candidacy for re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2007-2010

Voluntary pledges and commitments on human rights in accordance with Resolution A/RES/60/251

Our candidacy

The Netherlands warmly welcomed the establishment of the Human Rights Council. As a current member of the Council for a one-year term (2006-2007), the Netherlands is demonstrating its commitment to working without prejudice with all United Nations Member States to ensure that the new Council functions more effectively, in a non-selective manner and through engagement, dialogue and cooperation. The Netherlands would like to be able to continue in its efforts to make the Council an effective, efficient and credible defender of human rights worldwide. The Netherlands is seeking re-election to the Council for a regular three-year term (2007-2010) so that we may fulfil our responsibilities in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Our tradition of promoting and protecting human rights

The Netherlands is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, both at home and worldwide. For decades, human rights have been a cornerstone of Dutch policy on foreign affairs and development cooperation. Our national constitution explicitly mentions our commitment to promoting the development of the international legal order, which includes promoting human rights. The Netherlands is a Party to the major international human rights instruments and has always fully cooperated with the Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures. The Netherlands is active on human rights issues in the General Assembly, with a specific focus on combating religious intolerance and violence against women. The city of The Hague is seen by many as the 'legal capital of the world', because it hosts a number of important judicial institutions, such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC), the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The Netherlands has always been actively involved in the development of multilateral structures and is actively engaged in UN reform.

Our contribution to international cooperation

The Netherlands actively contributes to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. We are a major aid donor with an extensive development cooperation programme. The Netherlands is one of the few donor countries to meet the international norm of spending at least 0.7% of its gross national product on development cooperation (USD 5.5 billion annually). The Netherlands is one of the largest donors to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), to UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNRWA and is actively involved in UN peacekeeping operations. The Netherlands also supports human-rights related programmes at country level, through both bilateral and multilateral channels.

We remain convinced that dialogue, mutual understanding and respect, as well as knowledge and understanding of each other's countries and cultures, are crucial components of a sensible approach to human rights.

As a Council member, the Netherlands pledges to continue to:

1. Advance the protection and promotion of human rights on an international level

- The Netherlands participates actively in the work of the Human Rights Council. It will continue to cooperate with other UN Member States, civil society representatives and special procedures in order to make the Human Rights Council an effective, efficient and credible human rights instrument for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.
- The Netherlands will continue to contribute to the improvement of the Council's working methods and to the establishment of an effective Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The Netherlands is committed to constructive engagement in a UPR that includes reporting and follow-up and stands ready to undergo the review procedure when it is operational.
- The Netherlands will continue to support the work of the OHCHR through non-earmarked contributions, currently about USD 6 million annually, giving the High Commissioner full authority to use this contribution in her efforts to implement the policy priorities of her Plan of Action.
- The Netherlands will continue to actively pursue human rights in its bilateral relations, emphasising dialogue, partnership and technical cooperation through the exchange of experience and financial assistance and the application of a human

rights based approach. The Dutch Human Rights Ambassador plays an integral role in this cooperative approach.

- The Netherlands will continue to strongly support engagement of NGOs with the HRC.

2. Advance the protection and promotion of human rights at national level

- The Netherlands is in the process of completing its ratification procedures for the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC OP AC). The Netherlands supported the recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on Enforced Disappearances and looks forward to signing and ratifying these new treaties.
- The Netherlands will continue to uphold its standing invitation to all UN Special Procedures. In 2006, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women visited our country.
- The Netherlands will continue to fully cooperate with UN human rights treaty bodies by submitting timely periodic reports and acting on their concluding observations and recommendations promptly and in good faith.
- The Netherlands will continue to maintain an open dialogue with civil society on its human rights policy.
- A coalition of four civil society organisations is currently in the process of identifying options and writing a paper to the government with a view to establishing a National Human Rights Institute. The Dutch parliament has expressed its support for the creation of this institute.
- The Netherlands will continue to fight the scourge of racism and has implemented a National Action Plan to that end.