



Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations

THE CANDIDATURE OF ITALY TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 2011-2014 - VOLUNTARY PLEDGES AND COMMITMENTS -

Introduction

After completing its first term from 2007 to 2010, **Italy has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the 2011-2014 period.** Election to this important body would enable Italy to contribute more directly to the Council's activities and to its key role in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, and in keeping with the voluntary pledges and commitments undertaken upon the presentation of our candidature in 2007, **Italy has worked to strengthen the United Nations human rights system** in close cooperation with Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and the pertinent UN Agencies and Offices, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are committed to fostering the protection of human rights also in the regional framework and actively support the efforts in this field by the Council of Europe, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Italy has a long tradition of promoting and protecting human rights. At the international level, we believe human rights play a crucial role in guaranteeing peace, preventing conflicts and fostering the growth of stable and democratic societies. In a national capacity and as an EU member, we strongly support the promotion of human rights worldwide. The most effective defense of human rights is through dialogue with all States and co-operation in multilateral fora, particularly the United Nations, in keeping with the principles of universality, impartiality and objectivity.

Italy has a productive **collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner** for Human Rights, and cooperates fully with the **Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council**, to which it has issued a standing invitation. We have provided the necessary arrangements for the following visits to Italy: independence of judges and lawyers (2002); human rights of migrants (2004); freedom of expression (2004); racism (2006); and arbitrary detention (2008). Italy also received visits from the independent institutions of regional organizations such as: the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2004, 2008, 2009), the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (2004, 2006, 2008, 2009), the Council of Europe Committee Against Racism and Intolerance (2005 and 2010), the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (2005), ODHIR and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2008), OSCE - ODHIR Election Assessment Mission (2006, 2008).

Italy submits in a timely and thorough manner its periodic reports to the **Treaty Bodies of the United Nations** on the implementation of its obligations under international law. **Italy has ratified all the core human rights treaties**, accepting the extensive international obligations associated with the protection and promotion of human rights.

The treaties Italy has ratified are: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1952); Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1954) and related Protocol (1972); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1978); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1978); Optional Protocol to ICCPR (1978); Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR (1995); International Convention Against All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified on 5 January 1976); International Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1985) and related Optional Protocol (2000); International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1989); International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and related Optional Protocols on the sale of children and on children in armed conflict (2002); ICC the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1999); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related Protocol (2009). In addition, Italy has accepted the individual complaints mechanism stipulated in the CERD and CAT Conventions and in the Optional Protocols to ICCPR, CEDAW and CRPD.

Italy has been a strong supporter of the **international criminal justice** and was the host, in 1998, of the United Nations conference, from whose proceedings the "Rome Statute" was adopted, to establish the International Criminal Court.

We also placed our signature on **three other major agreements:** the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (2003); the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2007), and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2009). Domestic procedures for the ratification of the first two Treaties have been initiated, consistent with our pledges as a member of the UN Human Rights Council.

At the regional level, Italy has ratified several human rights treaties. These include the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Additional Protocols, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Protocols, the European Convention on the Rights of Child, and the European Social Charter. Italy fully recognizes the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

As a founding Member of the European Union, Italy has been fully **committed to European integration** from the start and deeply involved in the process of its institutional reforms. These include the drafting of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which sets out in a single text the full range of civil, political, economic and social rights of all European citizens and residents. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Charter has become legally binding.

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Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly Res. 60/251

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, Italy hereby presents a set of **voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of the human rights**.

Italy is the sixth largest contributor to the regular budget and to the peacekeeping budget of the **United Nations**. On a voluntary basis, it provides significant financial support to a broad array of UN activities. Our human rights commitment is focused on increasing the effectiveness of the UN, particularly the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other major UN agencies and programs.

In this framework, we will:

- *work constructively with and within the **Human Rights Council** and other bodies and mechanisms that have been or will be established under it;*
- ***encourage States** with a strong human rights record to run for membership on the Human Rights Council;*
- *support the work of the Special Procedures established by the Human Rights Council, including active participation in “**interactive dialogues**” with them;*
- *devote every effort to improving the **effectiveness of the UPR process**, in which Italy has participated since its establishment, in a spirit of constructive engagement and dialogue with States under review;*
- ***combat impunity**, also by promoting ratification of the Statute of the International Criminal Court;*
- *promote initiatives in human rights education and training within the Human Rights Council's agenda, including the adoption of a UN Declaration on the matter and implementation of the **World Program on Human Rights Education**;*
- *continue to support the **Office of the Special Adviser** of the U.N. Secretary General on the prevention of genocide, with a focus on the early warning of massive and serious violations of human rights.*

Discrimination on the basis of religion or belief is a major human rights violation wherever it occurs. The promotion of **freedom of religion or belief** and the protection of religious minorities are key priorities of Italy's human rights foreign policy.

Consistent with this commitment, Italy will:

- *support initiatives at the international and regional levels to **combat religious intolerance** and assure adequate protection for all religion minorities;*
- *support the work of the **Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom**;*
- *support initiatives by the **Alliance of Civilizations** to foster interreligious and intercultural dialogue.*

A sustained effort is needed to eradicate **racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance**. The best way to combat discriminatory attitudes and behaviour is through laws, education, and dialogue among cultures.

Italy will thus:

- **implement specific legislation** to counter expressions of racism and xenophobia, including the dissemination of racial or ethnic hatred and incitement to commit discriminatory acts of violence on racial, ethnic or religious grounds;
- **update its National Action Plan** against Racism, adopted in 2006, in line with the requirements defined by the UN system;
- **support initiatives and resolutions** presented to the Human Rights Council to prevent and combat racism, racial discrimination, and related forms of intolerance and xenophobia;
- **promote ambitious educational measures** to help eradicate all forms of discrimination.

Violence against women is a grave and widespread human rights violation that affects countless women and obstructs the achievement of equality, development, and peace. Italy played an active role in the approval of the Security Council Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict situations and is about to launch its National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325, to enhance the coordination and consistency of all its activities related to women, peace and security. In 2009, during our Presidency of the G8, we organized an international conference on the various forms and manifestations of violence against women, including domestic violence, rape and stalking. A component of these efforts are initiatives to stop **female genital mutilation**: Italy is working with concerned States to raise international awareness and is contributing to the UNICEF and UNFPA programs to promote the abandonment of this practice. **Italy is currently Vice President of the bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women.**

Along these lines, Italy will:

- **confirm and increase its commitment** to implement laws and policies in the field of women's rights, to prevent and combat violence against women in all its forms, including domestic violence, rape and stalking;
- **support international initiatives**, together with other regional groups and countries, in particular within the U.N. framework, to promote the complete abandonment of the practice of female genital mutilation wherever it occurs.

Italy attaches the utmost priority to the **Rights of the Child**. The international protection of children is an essential component of several Italian initiatives – including our active support to recent resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council – and bilateral development programs. We dedicate special attention to actions concerning **children involved in armed conflicts**.

During our term on the Security Council, we constantly advocated the inclusion of specific child-protection provisions in the mandates of UN peace-keeping missions. **Italy is a member of the Group of Friends on children and armed conflicts**, which brings together States committed to advancing this issue at the UN, and contributes to an important DPKO training project in this field. As a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its two Optional Protocols, Italy has dedicated special efforts to the fight against sexual crimes involving children and the protection of children from trafficking.

In this framework, Italy will:

- *continue to support international initiatives and development programs in favor of children;*
- *continue to support initiatives and programs for **child soldiers and child victims of armed conflict**;*
- *combat child pornography, including on the Internet, and **support child victims of violence, sexual abuse and trafficking.***

We are committed to the promotion of the **rights of persons with disabilities** and have ratified the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol**. Italian law has been accordingly amended. Italian Development Cooperation has adopted new Guidelines for mainstreaming the issue of disability in its international initiatives and specific attention is dedicated to the protection of persons with disabilities in emergency and post-conflict situations. Through a contribution to the World Bank, Italy is also supporting the work of the **Global Partnership for Disability and Development (GPDD)**.

We will:

- *continue to **promote implementation** of the principles contained in the Convention and its Protocol;*
- *further support initiatives to promote the **rights of persons with disabilities**, in cooperation with the UN agencies and other international organizations.*

Italy is committed to promoting the abolishment of the **death penalty** worldwide and attaches the utmost importance to the establishment of a moratorium on the application of capital punishment.

- *Italy will continue to **advocate for the adoption of a universal moratorium** on the use of the death penalty with a view to its complete abolition.*

In the field of **rule of law and promotion of democracy**, Italy will:

- *continue to support **electoral observation missions and follow-ups** in countries throughout the world;*
- ***strengthen partnerships** with governments, parliaments, and civil society to train officials, particularly in the judicial sector, who are from countries in post-conflict situations*

Full respect of Human Rights is one of the cornerstones of Italian domestic and foreign policy in the field of **counterterrorism**. In the UN context, Italy actively supports all initiatives aimed at promoting and implementing the respect of fundamental freedoms in the struggle against terrorism. These include the **review of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy**, listing and delisting procedures of terrorist groups and individuals according to UNSCR 1267/1999 and 1373/2001, technical assistance through international offices and institutions such as the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

Besides, Italy has promoted a comprehensive debate on the fight against terrorism worldwide during its term as G8 President in 2009, when a **Declaration on Counter-Terrorism** was adopted at the G8 Summit in L'Aquila.

- *Italy will continue to **support the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**, paying special attention to its four pillars, and to assure that the fight against terrorism is grounded in the protection of human rights and the rule of law.*

As a contracting party to all the main international legal instruments against human trafficking, Italy is fully committed to **the fight against trafficking in human beings**. One example of Italian-funded initiatives in this field is the IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking. **The Italian legal framework is victim-centred**, human rights-oriented and gender- and child-sensitive, focusing on the legal protection of all victims and a greater involvement of NGOs and local communities. The crucial feature of this legislation is the special renewable residence permit issued to the victims of trafficking.

Italy will continue to:

- ***support projects** to combat human trafficking in cooperation with the United Nations institutions and other international organizations that address this issue;*
- ***protect and assist the victims** of human trafficking at the domestic and international levels.*

To enhance the role of **civil society in the formulation and implementation of human rights policy and programs**, several permanent consultative mechanisms have been created at the central and local levels.

- *Italy will promote an ongoing, **open dialogue with civil society organizations** active in the promotion and protection of human rights, involving them in the drafting of actions and policies through permanent consultative mechanisms at the central and local levels.*

We welcome the **Universal Periodic Review** of Italy that took place in the Human Rights Council in February and June 2010, which gave an assessment of our domestic progress in the field of human rights.

The recommendations that were accepted at the end of the process (78 out of a total of 92) will help the Italian Parliament and Government **draw up a roadmap** for their work in human rights and represent an incentive to deliver within a precise timeframe. On the whole, the review will help strengthen and improve our human rights policy.

- *In connection with its UPR process, **Italy confirms its willingness to implement in a timely manner all accepted recommendations**, including those in important areas such as the fight against racism and racial discrimination, the situation of migrants and asylum-seekers, the treatment of the Roma and Sinti communities, the human rights of women and children, freedom of opinion and expression, independence of the judiciary and administration of justice, and the commitment to establish a national independent human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles.*