

Candidature of Italy to the Human Rights Council, 2026–2028

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. Italy has always been engaged and committed to the work of the Human Rights Council and has acted as member of this Council for three terms (2008-2010; 2012-2014; 2019-2021). Italy believes in multilateral institutions and intends to give further contribution to their mission: in this framework, Italy presents its candidature to the Council for the 2026–2028 period. In the conviction that there cannot be long-lasting peace and sustainable development when human rights are not respected, Italy firmly believes that the Human Rights Council can be pivotal for crisis prevention, redress of violations and reconciliation, thus contributing to promoting peace and justice worldwide. In this spirit, its election to the Human Rights Council would enable Italy to continue contributing directly to the Council's activities and to play an active role in protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms in Italian foreign policy

2. The protection and promotion of human rights represent a firm and sustained priority of Italy's foreign policy. The Italian Constitution recognizes human rights as inviolable and has an entire section dedicated to the rights and duties of citizens.

Italian action bases on the universality, interdependence, interrelatedness and non-selectivity of human rights. Italy strongly believes that dialogue and cooperation among Member States can contribute to promoting and protecting human rights and that technical assistance and capacity-building are important tools for supporting Member States in complying with their obligations and in preventing human rights violations worldwide. Italy works actively to mainstream human rights into law, policy and practice and to expand the space for civil society. We are committed to ensure that human rights apply equally online and offline, in the belief that digital technologies can contribute significantly to the protection and promotion of human rights but at the same time can have a negative impact, in particular by enabling new forms of violence and abuses, which must be prevented and countered.

Italy advocates for the respect of international humanitarian law and supports the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Italy and international conventions and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights

3. Italy has ratified all major international conventions on the protection and promotion of human rights, including all major International Labour Organization conventions. Its resolute action for promoting and protecting human rights is at the core of the Italian integrated approach for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, food security, healthy lives and well-being for all and at fighting poverty.

4. Italy actively promoted the establishment of the **International Criminal Court** in the belief that the cause of peace can be served only if those responsible for the most serious crimes having an international impact are prosecuted and brought to justice. Italy hosted in Rome, more than 25 years ago, the United Nations conference that led to the adoption of the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, which Italy signed immediately and ratified the following year. Italy

strongly supports and promotes the Court and its crucial work and is committed to defend its integrity and independence and will continue to do so in the belief that no long-lasting peace is possible without justice.

5. At the regional level, Italy ratified the **most important human rights treaties** and fully recognizes the jurisdiction of the **European Court of Human Rights**.

6. Italy firmly supports the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** mechanism as a unique process, which permits a periodic review of the human rights performance of all the UN Member States. Italy takes active part in this process, following a constructive approach based on dialogue, cooperation and mutual comprehension. In the firm belief that human rights are to be respected all over the world, leaving no one behind, Italy makes specific recommendations to all the States under review, suggesting – with constructive and respectful approach - specific and focused actions aimed at improving the human rights situations in the States under review.

7. Italy underwent consecutive cycles of the **universal periodic review** and its mechanism, which it firmly supported. Since the **third cycle of the universal periodic review**, in 2019, Italy has further enhanced the protection and promotion of human rights at the national level taking almost all the recommendations. A non-exhaustive list of achievements includes:

withdrawing its two remaining reservations to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; adopting its first national action plan on business and human rights in accordance with relevant 2011 United Nations guidelines; adopting its fourth national action plan on women and peace and security; adopting the decrees implementing the 2016 legislation on civil unions for same-sex couples; establishing a solidarity fund for victims of discrimination; launching the extraordinary national action plan against sexual and gender-based violence; establishing anti-violence centres and women's shelters; launching the first national action plan against trafficking and serious exploitation of human beings; reinforcing national measures for fostering interreligious dialogue; adopting a comprehensive legal framework concerning the protection of foreign unaccompanied minors; establishing the national authority for the protection of detainees' and prisoners' rights (national preventive mechanism); introducing the crime of torture in its legal system; adopting legislative measures to promote the rights of persons with disabilities; adopting a national strategy against anti-Semitism; appointing a special Government envoy on freedom of religion and belief and interfaith-dialogue.

Cooperation with the United Nations

8. Italy has an effective partnership with the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** and has increased its financial contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner. Italy fully cooperates with the **Special Procedures** of the Human Rights Council, to which it has issued a **standing invitation**. Italy is committed to develop and optimize the working methods of the HRC, including its Special Procedures, achieving important results in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

9. Italy submits in a timely and thorough manner its periodic reports to the **treaty bodies** of the United Nations on the implementation of its human rights obligations under international law.

10. In this framework, Italy will:

- Actively engage and work constructively within the Human Rights Council and other bodies and mechanisms that have been or will be established under it, taking into consideration the key role that human rights promotion and

protection play in conflict prevention, in fostering long-term peaceful settlements of conflict and in the pursuit of the 2030 sustainable development goals;

- Work with determination to further improve the effectiveness, including in the implementation phase, of the universal periodic review process, in which Italy has participated since its establishment, in a spirit of constructive dialogue
- Continue to respect the independence and support the activities and the work of the special procedures established by the Human Rights Council, including by fostering joint participation in interactive dialogues
- Continue to prevent and combat international crimes and impunity, including by taking concrete steps to ensure the accountability of perpetrators
- Continue to support initiatives for responding promptly to human rights emergencies
- Continue to ensure that even under exceptional circumstances – such as conflicts - human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully guaranteed, with special regard to the rights of the most vulnerable categories
- Further promote human rights education and undertake awareness campaigns on the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Enhance the role of civil society and the youth, in particular in the formulation and implementation of human rights policy and programmes, including in the areas of early warning and prevention; support the participation of civil society organizations in the Human Rights Council; and establish new channels for collaboration and dialogue with civil society organizations

Fight against all forms of discrimination

12. We need a sustained effort to eradicate racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and all forms of discrimination, including when based on religion and belief. Italy maintains a firm and active stance in the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination, being actively involved in the main relevant international initiatives on the issue. Italy committed, both at international and national level, to prevent and combat the spread of hate speech, also by participating to all the relevant initiatives and events. The principle of non-discrimination, in law and in practice, and the principle of dignity for everyone are at the heart of Italian foreign policy with respect to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The best way to combat discriminatory attitudes and behaviours is through the adoption and implementation of ad hoc laws, education and dialogue among cultures. In 2020, the Italian Government accepted the non-legally binding IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) working definition of anti-Semitism and appointed a National Coordinator for the fight against anti-Semitism, instructing him to carry out a survey on the application of the definition in Italy. In 2022, Italy has adopted a national strategy to combat antisemitism. In November 2023, Italy has signed and supported a “Joint Statement of the Coordinators, Special Representatives, Envoy and Ambassadors on Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination”.

Italy is committed to opposing all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation. Italy will engage to prevent all forms of violence against LGBTI persons. Italy is part of the Equal Rights Coalition and of the Core Group in New

York, aiming at promoting the human rights of LGBTI persons in the framework of the UN fora.

13. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue to support specific initiatives and resolutions presented to the Human Rights Council to prevent and combat racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and all forms of discrimination, including when based on religious grounds or on sexual orientation
- Further promote ambitious educational programmes to help eradicate all forms of discrimination
- Further support the engagement of civil society organizations in the fight against all forms of discrimination
- Further prevent and combat the spreading - including online - of hate speech, including when based on antisemitism, racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance based on religious grounds and all forms of discrimination and intolerance.

Gender equality

14. The protection and promotion of **women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment** represent key priorities for Italy's international action, both in multilateral international and regional contexts and in its bilateral relations. Italy is party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and actively participates in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. Italy ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and continues to encourage its wider ratification. Italy strongly supports international campaigns for the eradication of harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, including by promoting and actively participating in the negotiations on related resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Italy supports international initiatives to prevent sexual violence in conflict and emergency situations and to hold those responsible of such violations accountable. Italy is part of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies.

Restrictive measures adopted in response to the pandemics crisis led to an **increase in sexual and gender-based violence against women**, in particular domestic violence. Italy is working with determination to deal with this trend, strengthening its legislative and administrative efforts to prevent and combat all forms of violence and discrimination against women.

15. Italy attaches great importance to ensuring the full and active participation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict and in post-conflict cooperation efforts, in keeping with the **women and peace and security** agenda of the Security Council. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2017, with the aim of increasing the participation of women in conflict prevention and mediation, Italy launched the "Mediterranean Women Mediators Network", a multi-year initiative that we hope will contribute to enhancing women's participation and capacity-building in such a critical field. Italy has adopted the 4th **National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security** on December 10th 2020 and is in the process

of preparing the 5th National Action Plan. The drafting of this National Action Plan was done with the full engagement of the civil society's organisations.

16. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue working with determination to prevent and combat violence against women in all its forms, including by implementing a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and by continuing its support for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and programmes related to women
- Actively support, together with other regional groups and countries, international campaigns for the eradication of harmful practices
- Undertake actions to empower women and girls and to advance their human rights and empowerment as a matter of priority in the economic, cultural and social context and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the contribution of all concerned public and private stakeholders.
- Ensure that humanitarian programming is gender responsive and in compliance with humanitarian policies on women's empowerment and women's rights.

Rights of the children

17. Italy attaches the utmost importance to the **rights of children**, especially those in situations of vulnerability, such as children at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, children victims of all forms of violence and exploitation, including in the digital environment, and children in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Italy ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (2016) and recognized the competence of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to receive and consider communications in which a State party claims that another State party is not fulfilling its obligations (see article 12 of the Protocol). Italy actively participates in the negotiations of the resolutions on the rights of the child adopted by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. During its presidency of the Security Council, in November 2017, Italy promoted the adoption of resolution 2388 (2017) on trafficking in persons. The resolution contains a number of paragraphs aiming at the protection of children who are victims of trafficking, particularly those who are unaccompanied, in terms of identification, assistance, health care, education and exemption from detention. The promotion and protection of children's rights in armed conflict is also an integral part of Italy's international commitment to children's rights. Italy is a member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, which brings together States committed to advancing this issue at the United Nations. During its term as a member of the Security Council, Italy promoted the introduction of specific provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of United Nations peace operations.

On the occasion of the **33rd Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent** (Geneva, 9-12 December 2019), Italy presented an **open pledge to guarantee the security and the rights of children affected by armed conflicts**, that reached the widest support by States among the Conference pledges. With the said open pledge Italy committed, among other things, to encourage States to sign and ratify to the First Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Right of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; to ensure that humanitarian actors are given unimpeded

access to children during armed conflicts; to integrate into the military training the needs of children affected by armed conflicts; to conduct awareness campaigns about the importance to prevent the recruitment and use of children during armed conflicts; to encourage the States that have not yet done so, to sign the Safe School Declaration and to promote its effective implementation; to continue working in cooperation with and to support the activities of the UN Special Representative for children and armed conflict; to actively contribute to the outreach activities of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC).

18. In this framework, Italy will continue:

- To actively support international initiatives and programmes aimed at preventing and combating the involvement of children in armed conflict
- To prevent and combat child pornography, support child victims of violence, sexual abuse and trafficking and take all steps necessary to strengthen international cooperation for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible for acts involving the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography and child sex tourism, supporting the work of the competent special procedures and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children
- To promote initiatives aimed at fostering education for all children, adolescents and young people, enabling adolescents and young people to be agents of positive transformation
- To support initiatives and programmes to ensure the enjoyment by all children of their economic, social and cultural rights, without discrimination, contributing to the creation of a safe and enabling environment – both offline and online - in which the well-being of the child is ensured.
- Promote and support international initiatives and programs aimed at preventing and combating all forms of violence, in particular in the digital sphere, sexual violence, violence against children during armed conflicts.

Engagement against death penalty

19. The **universal moratorium of the death penalty** is a key priority of the Italian Government. Italy is firmly convinced that the moratorium contributes to the enhancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Italy upholds respect for the rule of law, working with determination to develop effective crime prevention and response strategies, to promote increasingly effective and fair justice systems and to combat impunity, while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, with particular attention to the presumption of innocence and the rights of children in the justice system. Italian action can count on the joint commitment of institutions and civil society and is inspired by an inclusive approach and a spirit of cooperation, dialogue, mutual respect and understanding.

20. In this framework, Italy will continue:

- its relentless efforts for the adoption of a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to its abolition,
- its active engagement in the UN negotiations on the resolutions regarding the fights against death penalty, both on Human Rights Council and on

General Assembly, as well as in the outreach campaign to foster support to the UNGA Resolution on a universal moratorium of the death penalty,

- support national-led initiatives and national debates on this issue, in particular by organizing national and international events, seminars and awareness campaigns in collaboration with the civil society organizations and all the relevant stakeholders.

Freedom of religion or belief

21. Italy works with determination for the promotion of **freedom of religion or belief** and the protection of people belonging to religious minorities. Italy attaches great importance to the promotion of pluralism, inclusion and tolerance, as well as cross-cultural, cross-religious and interfaith dialogue. In the United Nations context, Italy supports initiatives for the engagement of religious leaders in the prevention of hate crime and conflict situations. Italy is also an active member of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Italy promotes humanitarian and development cooperation programmes to support religious and ethnic communities that are victims of sectarian violence.

22. In this framework, Italy will continue:

- To promote and support initiatives at the international and regional and national levels to combat religious intolerance and protect all people belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, identifying concrete measures for protecting victims of violence or discrimination
- To promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue involving religious leaders
- To support the work of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and to actively participate to the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief
- To work closely with the United Nations and other international organizations in order to strengthen the available analysis and assessment tools to identify in a timely and systematic manner the risk of atrocity crimes.

23. The **preservation of cultural and religious heritage**, which is firmly linked to the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, is an important tool for safeguarding the historical and cultural identity of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, and therefore for the enjoyment of cultural rights.

24. Italy promotes the implementation of initiatives to prevent and counter acts aiming at damaging, destroying and trafficking in cultural heritage, such as Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), unanimously adopted on 24 March 2017, on the protection of cultural heritage and the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict. In this regard, Italy is fully committed to fight illicit trade in objects of cultural heritage with preventive, repressive and remedial measures in compliance with the obligations provided for in the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing Illicit Import, Export and Transfer in Ownership of Cultural Property, as well as with the obligations provided for in the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects and in compliance with the obligations provided for in the

2001 UNESCO International Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

25. In this framework, Italy will continue:

- to work to promote inclusivity, tolerance and respect for diversity
- to actively work, with all other relevant international actors, to protect cultural heritage, with a view to promoting universal respect for cultural rights
- to support the activities of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights.

Trafficking in human beings

26. **Trafficking in persons** is a serious human rights violation that can represent a crime against humanity and a serious threat to international peace and security. Italy is actively committed to the fight against trafficking in human beings and strongly supports the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. Italy, furthermore, strives to create and implement legal and safe channels of migration and to foster economic growth and employment opportunities in Countries of origin.

27. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue to support and pursue with determination initiatives to prevent and combat human trafficking in cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, including to promote the universal ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
- Continue to actively protect the victims of human trafficking at both the national and international levels, paying attention to those in vulnerable situations, such as women and children, including unaccompanied minors
- Promote with determination international law enforcement and judicial cooperation
- Support the activities of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children
- Tackle the root causes of irregular migration and promote the sustainable growth in Countries of origin, with concrete and long-term programmes adopting an inclusive approach based on three pillars: listening - respecting - building together

Right to work and to food

28. Economic, social and cultural rights are fundamental for the dignity of every human being. In this framework, Italy attaches the utmost importance to the right of every person to work.

Italy is actively engaged in promoting the right to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food. Climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, international geopolitical and financial instability, the loss of biodiversity are severely impacting on food security and the right to have access to sustainable, safe, and nutritious food. Against this backdrop, Italy is playing in many ways a prominent role for the definition of a food security strategy, also in order to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Matera Declaration, adopted during the Italian G20 Presidency, recognized for the first time that food security is a priority of the international agenda. In response to the food crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, Italy made efforts – in the framework of the G7 – to address its impact in the Mediterranean region, launching the Mediterranean Ministerial Dialogue on the Food Crisis.

In the context of the UN Food Systems Summit, whose coordination hub is located at FAO's premises, Italy hosted the pre-Summit in Rome in 2021. In July 2023 Italy hosted again in Rome the Food Systems Summit +2, a high-profile event convened by the UN Secretary General to take an initial stock of the progress of the transformation of food systems and to inspire a new form of global momentum and solidarity.

In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue to support and promote the work of the UN Food Systems' Coordination Hub located in Rome;
- Support the activities of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food;
- Continue to support specific initiatives and resolutions presented to the Human Rights Council and in the General Assembly to protect and operationalize the right to food;

Protecting and promoting the rights of persons in situation of vulnerability

29. Italy is fully committed to protect and further promote the rights of **persons in situation of vulnerability**, including persons with disabilities and older persons.

30. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been law in Italy since 2009. In compliance with the UN Convention, Italy has undertaken an important reform on disability, as envisaged by the Enabling Act on Disability (Law No. 227 of December 2021). The Italian Government has adopted implementing decrees by June 2024. The reform introduces a new approach to disability based on the following aspects:

- Assessment of the disability with the introduction of the reasonable accommodation principle;
- Multidimensional assessment of disability aimed at the development of an individual, personalised and participatory life project;
- Establishment of a National Guarantor of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Upgrading of public services in terms of accessibility and inclusion;

A G7 meeting on "Inclusion and Disability" will be organised for the first time at ministerial level during the Italian G7 Presidency in October 2024.

Italy pays particular attention to the protection of persons with disabilities in emergency and post-conflict situations.

In this framework, Italy will:

- Further promote the rights of persons with disabilities, including by supporting the widest possible accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the implementation of its principles
- Develop and implement advocacy and awareness-raising programmes to enhance understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities

31. Italy attaches particular importance to the promotion of the rights of older persons. In this regard, Italy is committed to the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), as well as to the realization of all the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals, including those that are particularly relevant for the promotion of the rights of older persons. Italy actively participates in the negotiations of the resolutions on the rights of older persons.

32. In this framework, Italy will:

- Further promote and support initiatives at the international, regional and national levels to concretely protect and promote the rights of older persons;
- Further encourage the exchange of good practices with other countries, international organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders for improving the wellbeing of older women and men;

Human Rights Defenders

33. Italy recognizes the paramount importance of **civil society**, whose contribution to building democratic and pluralistic societies, stability and prosperity is irreplaceable. **Human rights defenders** play a pivotal role in the promotion and protection of human rights at the local, national, regional and international levels by raising awareness on human rights issues and promoting higher standards of protection. In this context, **journalists, including independent journalists, bloggers and citizen journalists**, are an essential component of a free and open society and a key instrument to keep an accountable system of government.

34. In this framework, Italy will:

- Continue to actively support human rights defenders and step up its efforts against all forms of reprisal with a view to creating a safe and enabling environment in which human rights defenders can operate free from hindrance and in security and ensuring accountability for crimes committed against them.
- Strongly supporting women human rights defenders and the prominent role they play in addressing gender inequality.
- Support the activities of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

- 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.
- Support initiatives aiming at raising awareness on the need to devote greater attention to the protection of journalists, both online and offline, and call all States to respect in full their international obligations related to freedom of expression and media freedom, in line with Italy's membership in the Media Freedom Coalition.