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

Note verbale dated 18 April 2007 from the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and has the honour to convey the decision of the Government of Egypt to submit its candidature for the membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2007-2010. This candidature was endorsed by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, as well as the League of Arab States. Enclosed herewith is the note that includes Egypt's voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of Human Rights both domestically and internationally.

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations highly appreciates the assistance of the President of the General Assembly in transmitting this note as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 105 (e) of the sixty-first session.



Annex to the note verbale dated 18 April 2007 from the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Egypt's voluntary pledges to promote human rights

I. Framework for action

1. As a founding member of the United Nations, a party to all core international human rights instruments,^a and one of the active players in the formulation of the international human rights agenda, Egypt presents its candidature for the membership of the Human Rights Council.

2. Egypt was actively engaged in the negotiations that lead to the establishment of the Human Rights Council, and is participating in the ongoing deliberations in New York and Geneva on the review of the terms of reference of the various components of the mechanisms inherited from the Commission on Human Rights and on the elaboration of the new mechanisms created pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council.

^a Egypt ratified core human rights instruments and has benefited from the accumulated knowledge of its large number of independent experts elected to the membership of the various treaty bodies. The following is a list of ratified human rights instruments:

- The Slavery Convention, 1926.
- The Protocol amending the Slavery Convention, 1926.
- Convention (No. 29) Concerning Forced Labour, 1930.
- The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948.
- The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, 1950.
- The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951.
- The International Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1953.
- The Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade, 1956.
- Convention concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour (Convention 105), 1957.
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965.
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966.
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.
- Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967.
- The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, 1973.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1980.
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981.
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984.
- The International Convention against Apartheid in Sports, 1985.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990.
- The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990.
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990.
- The Arab Charter on the Rights of Children, 1992.
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, 2000.
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 2000.

3. Egypt believes that the Human Rights Council offers an historic opportunity to address the shortcomings of the Commission on Human Rights and to build on its achievements to establish a new international human rights system where all human rights are promoted and protected on equal footing, without distinction or double standards.

4. Egypt is constantly striving to upgrade the level of its implementation of all human rights instruments which it has ratified, guided by the work of the international human rights mechanisms and benefiting from the experiences of other countries, and the agreed priorities and actions in the outcome documents of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly in September 2000, and its 2005 World Summit Outcome.

5. If elected to the Human Rights Council, Egypt will work constructively with all parties, on the basis of dialogue and cooperation, to remove obstacles to the full realization of all human rights and to prevent human rights violations throughout the world. Egypt will continue to call for the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, emphasizing, in this respect, the promotion of democracy, rule of law and good governance at all levels. Egypt will also emphasize the importance of focusing on the objectives of poverty eradication, fighting racial discrimination and xenophobia, promoting cultural and religious tolerance, advancing the rights of women and children, and raising the overall global awareness of human rights with strong emphasis on the role of education.

II. Egypt undertakes the following commitments

A. At the international and regional levels, the Government of Egypt will:

1. Work to make the Human Rights Council a strong, effective and efficient body, capable of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all;
2. Stress the importance of dialogue and cooperation among Member States, and the provision of technical assistance to enhance national capacities of Member States to fulfil their national human rights strategies and international obligations;
3. Support the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in fulfilling its mandate; in this regard, Egypt looks forward to hosting the new OHCHR regional office for North Africa in Cairo;
4. Enhance South-South cooperation in the field of human rights through innovative methods and instruments such as the African Peer Review Mechanism which constitutes a pioneering experience of self-assessment and regional cooperation;
5. Promote the constructive role of NGOs and civil society at large in the promotion of human rights at all levels;
6. Contribute to the development of the standard-setting mandate of the Human Rights Council, based on its firm belief in the indivisibility of all human rights, particularly in the area of economic, social and cultural rights, and continue to support efforts geared towards the elaboration of an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, with a view to

promoting the realization of these rights in the framework of international cooperation;

7. Continue to promote the realization of the right to development, as an inalienable right for all peoples and individuals; and to this end shall support the ongoing efforts to remove existing obstacles hindering the further development of this concept and its operationalization, through a cumulative process, based on practical applications, and in a context of cooperation and consensus-building between developing and developed countries;

8. Continue to build on its initiative of 2005 in the Commission on Human Rights on the protection of human rights of civilians in armed conflicts as it reflects Egypt's vision and approach vis-à-vis the complementarity between international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the realm of promoting and protecting human rights, and providing mechanisms to ensure the implementation of international law as well as providing redress mechanisms to victims;

9. Participate actively in developing the terms of reference and modalities for the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, and in reviewing and strengthening the system of special procedures and other mechanisms of the Council, believing that this should be undertaken in a manner that promotes the complementarity of the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council and avoids duplicating the functions of the treaty bodies;

10. Work with other Member States and relevant United Nations bodies for the reform of the United Nations treaty-body system, and continue to support United Nations agencies, programmes and funds that have a role in contributing to the promotion of human rights such as UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, and the United Nations Democracy Fund;

11. Continue to support regional and international processes that seek to advance the cause of women's rights, the empowerment of women and gender equality;

12. Continue to support regional and international processes that advance the rights of the child;

13. Contribute to the enhancement of the system of international protection for refugees, particularly from Africa, in conformity with human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law;

14. Encourage more cooperation and political dialogue in the field of human rights within the African continent in order to enhance human rights and fundamental freedoms in the African continent through the implementation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, and the African Peer Review Mechanism; and continue to engage in the examination of the Protocols to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relative to the rights of women and to the African Court of Justice and Human Rights with a view to their ratification; and will remain committed to upgrading the African human rights system and to the strengthening of the role of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, building on its achievements during the past 25 years, particularly its rich jurisprudence;

15. As a leading member of the Arab League, Egypt ratified the Arab Charter on the Rights of the Child and is currently in the process of ratifying the Arab Charter on Human Rights, and will remain committed to contributing to the ongoing efforts

to strengthen the Permanent Human Rights Committee of the League of Arab States building on the lessons learned from experience in other regions of the world;

16. Remain committed to upgrading the human rights system of the Organization of the Islamic Conference building on the 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, and the various instruments developed ever since, including the ongoing work to draft a convention on the elimination of racial discrimination in Islam.

B. At the domestic level, the Government of Egypt will:

1. Preserve the freedom of the press, the independence of the judiciary, and the role of the Supreme Constitutional Court in reviewing the constitutionality of the laws and to act as an arbiter between the various branches of government;

2. Endeavour to fulfil the aspirations of its people for a better future through a process of political, social and economic reform, anchored in the promotion and protection of human rights, and to implement the national human rights strategy, which is based on the following pillars:

- Promoting a culture of human rights through education, based on the lessons of the International Decade on Human Rights Education of the General Assembly 1994-2004.
- Providing the necessary capacity-building and training programmes in the field of human rights to law enforcement officials, judges, public prosecutors, lawyers, journalists, parliamentarians, and the media.
- Strengthening the national human rights bodies, through the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the newly established Permanent Human Rights Committee of the People's Assembly, specialized human rights departments in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Interior, and the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Ombudsman Office in the National Council on Human Rights, and strengthening the Ombudsman Office in the National Council for Women.
- Providing an objective and credible response to complaints, communications and requests received from international and regional human rights mechanisms and cooperating with them in the fulfilment of their mandates.

3. Remain committed, based on the above, to enhance and strengthen its national human rights infrastructure and to continue to integrate the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms into its national development strategies and policies;

4. Remain committed to further strengthen the national redress mechanisms available to all citizens with a view to enable them to report any complaints and to guard against impunity of any kind; in this regard, Egypt is committed to further strengthen the independence and capabilities of the judiciary, including the Public Prosecution Office, the National Council on Human Rights, including its new Ombudsman Office to be established, and the Ombudsman Office of the National Council for Women addressing complaints related to violence against women, and the hotline of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood addressing cases of violence against children;

5. Remain committed to strengthen the National Council on Human Rights, as an independent body, established in conformity with the Paris Principles adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which is entrusted to formulate a national plan of action for the protection and promotion of human rights in Egypt and submit this plan to the Government, in addition to playing a crucial role receiving and following up on individual complaints, and acting as a bridge between the Government and civil society, the Government will continue to respond to the reports of the National Council on Human Rights and to examine the recommendations and observations therein with a view to their implementation;
6. Continue to promote the social, economic and political empowerment of women through affirmative action programmes, gender mainstreaming in national development planning, gender budgeting and formation of women groups; and continue to work towards combating violence against women and the total elimination of discrimination against women through legislative measures as well as effective implementation of existing policies, while continuing to support the National Council on Women as the focal point for women's issues and to support its Ombudsman Office with the mandate to receive women's complaints, and provide them with legal assistance;
7. Continue to support the work done by the National Council on Childhood and Motherhood in formulating and implementing strategies and programmes that promote and protect the rights of children, including combating harmful practices perpetrated against the girl child;
8. Continue on the path of reform and modernization in the political, economic and social fields, building on the momentum of the preceding two years and the achievements realized, including the holding of the first multi-candidate presidential elections, the abolishment of state security courts and hard labour sentences, the building of an active partnership between the Government and the civil society, the adoption of legislative amendments in the area of pre-trial detention, and strengthening the independence of the judiciary;
9. Remain committed to lifting the current state of emergency upon the completion and adoption of a new anti-terrorism legislation, the objective of which is to achieve the delicate balance between protecting the security of the society and the respect of human rights;
10. Remain committed to continue its path towards deepening its democracy, and is presently taking historic steps in the direction of political reform and building a competitive and open political system, through the amendment of 34 articles of the Constitution, aiming at achieving more balance between the executive and the legislative branches, the devolution of some powers from the Presidency to the Council of Ministers, strengthening the powers of the legislative branch and the independence of the judiciary, modernizing local government, and promoting an electoral system that is more conducive to increased participation of all segments of the society, in addition to bringing the Egyptian Constitution in line with the new social, economic, and political realities of the day;
11. Remain committed to the review process of its obligations and commitment under the universal periodic review mechanism during its tenure in the Human Rights Council under the terms, conditions and modalities developed by the Council;

12. Expeditiously start the process for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as soon as possible and as a matter of priority, as well as the Convention on Enforced Disappearances upon completion of the internal review by the competent national authorities and of the required constitutional procedures;

13. Periodically examine the state of the implementation of human rights instruments to which Egypt is party, with a view to ensure harmony and consistency between national legislations and international obligations, bearing in mind that international instruments become, upon ratification, part of the national legal system;

14. Continue to promote public awareness of human rights in the society by introducing human rights materials in educational curricula at all levels and organizing mass awareness campaigns through the media and civil society, with particular emphasis on the rights of women and children;

15. Continue to encourage the efforts of civil society, NGOs and the media to contribute as partners towards the protection and promotion of human rights within the applicable national legislations.
