



**India's Candidature
Human Rights Council for 2019-2021**

**Voluntary Pledges and Commitments
in accordance with
United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/251**

Ancient Indian wisdom of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” sees the world as one family with ethos of openness and respect for diversity; co-existence and cooperation. With one-sixth of the global population, India is home to a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic population that has lived together for millennia.

2. India has a long tradition of promoting and protecting human rights. It is reflected in the vision of the nation's founding fathers who framed the Constitution. The Constitution of India enshrines India's commitment to human rights by guaranteeing to its citizens fundamental political and civil rights and provides for the progressive realization and enforcement of economic, social and cultural rights.

3. These Constitutional provisions underpin the national identity of 1.25 billion people. The most basic of several Fundamental Rights for both citizens and non-citizens is the Right to Life and Liberty in Article 21 of the Constitution.

4. As the world's largest democracy, India's secular polity is complemented by an independent judiciary, a range of national and state level commissions that monitor compliance with human rights, a free press, and a vibrant and vocal civil society. A series of affirmative measures are in place to help the more vulnerable and marginalized and to address issues of social exclusion, deprivation and disadvantage that may be faced by such groups.

5. The National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) - an independent and dynamic body that is accredited as an A-status institution by the Global Alliance of

National Human Rights Institutions - monitors human rights developments in India and shares its experience and expertise with its counterparts in other countries.

6. India's engagement with the United Nations Human Rights Council (UN HRC) has been guided by the significance of the UN body to frame the international discourse on human rights agenda. For India, the promotion and protection of human rights is essential to achieving the ultimate goal of socio-economic advancement of all people on this planet.

7. Its interest in serving in the Council is rooted in its belief that promotion and protection of human rights is best pursued through dialogue, cooperation and constructive and collaborative engagement that would help in shaping a better collective future for all. India's presence on the Council would continue to bring in pluralistic, moderate and balanced perspective to straddle various divides or differences therein.

8. India has consistently demonstrated in practice its commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms. In May 2017, for third time in less than ten years, India's human rights record was reviewed under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the UNHRC. India also presented its Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) of the ECOSOC at the United Nations in July 2017. Both of these voluntary and State-driven processes elicited wide interest.

9. India maintains that sustainable lifestyles, and sustainable patterns of consumption and production, are important to achieving inclusive sustainable development. Major initiatives of Government of India like *BetiBachaoBetiPadhao*--Celebrate the Girl Child and Enable her Education, *Swachh Bharat*--Clean India, *Jan DhanYojana*--Bank Accounts for All, *Smart Cities*, *Make in India*, *Digital India*, *Skill India*, *Startup India*, etc., mirror the targets of the Seventeen SDGs for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

10. India attaches utmost priority to poverty eradication and achieving inclusive sustainable development. The government's motto of "SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas" that is All Together and Development for All reflects India's commitment to achieving inclusive development in the spirit of 'leaving no one behind'. In all its policies, India seeks to ensure inclusive development and the protection of rights of vulnerable groups.

11. A similar commitment ensured success of climate actions of Parties to the landmark Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Combating Climate Change (UNFCCC). India has been an active participant in the deliberations at the UNFCCC, and all international fora with respect to the efforts to combat Climate Change. India has articulated its belief in ethical and people-centric approach to Climate Change by espousing "Climate Justice" and sustainable lifestyle. India played a

constructive role to aid the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement by ratifying it in October 2016, and for the amendment to the Montreal Protocol. The Supreme Court of India has recognized the right to clean environment as a part of an individual's right to life guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

12. India recognizes the urgent need to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy to combat Climate Change and believes that solar energy offers a clean, climate friendly and inexhaustible energy resource with an unprecedented opportunity to bring energy security to the people. India co-chaired the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance with France on 11 March 2018 in New Delhi. India extended \$ 27 million towards hosting the ISA secretariat, created an ISA corpus fund, offered training support for ISA member countries at National Institute for Solar Energy (NISE) and also provided support for demonstration projects for solar home lighting, solar pumps for farmers and for other solar applications.

13. India believes that the United Nations should have the necessary resources for its activities and has been a regular contributor to the UN. In 2017, India announced setting up of an India-UN Development Partnership Fund in association with the UN Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). India has significantly scaled up the contribution to the Fund through a staggered contribution of \$100 million. These resources are non-earmarked in the spirit of sustained predictable funding for SDGs and South-South Cooperation.

14. In a unique initiative India launched a satellite in 2017 that focuses on supporting countries in its neighbourhood in such areas as communication, broadcasting and Internet services, disaster management, tele-medicine, tele-education and weather forecasting.

15. An important plank of India's development agenda has been its push towards good governance and the creation of a knowledge society. "Digital India" programme seeks to transform India into a digitally empowered society through increased connectivity, better access to knowledge, delivery of services, and e-governance through digital means.

16. Apart from improving governance structures, India's development policy focuses on ensuring social security, right to work with just and favourable conditions, and to a range of socio-economic entitlements to all citizens. For instance, India has also continued its efforts in addressing child malnutrition. The coverage of the Integrated Child Development Scheme has been expanded for better nutrition, health, and overall development of children that are less than 6 years old. It also provides nutritional and health support to pregnant and lactating mothers. India continues to work towards effective implementation of the Mid-Day Meal scheme in government-run schools.

17. India is committed to doubling the farmer's income by 2022. The government strategy includes emphasis on irrigation for more crop per drop, provision of quality seeds

and nutrients according to the soil quality of each farm, large investments in warehouses and cold chains to prevent post-harvest losses, promotion of value addition through food processing, implementation of National Agricultural Markets and e-platforms (e-NAM), mitigation of the risk, introduction of crop insurance scheme at a lower cost, promotion of allied activities such as dairy-animal husbandry, poultry, bee-keeping, horticulture and fisheries.

18. India remains a young nation; over 60% of its population is below the age of 35. India seeks to be “Skill Capital” of the world through the “Skill India Initiative” and is working with several other countries with a focus on getting its youth to acquire the requisite skills for global needs.

19. Government has enacted the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 which came into force with effect from 2016. The amendments, inter alia covers complete prohibition on employment or work of children below 14 years and prohibition on employment or work of adolescents in the age group of 14-18 years in hazardous occupations and processes. These amendments have brought the legislation in conformity with the ILO Convention No.138 concerning Minimum Age for Entry to Employment & Work & ILO Convention No. 182 concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour. With the ratification of these Conventions, India has now ratified 6 out of 8 core ILO Conventions.

20. India has taken various steps to promote equal participation by women in the workforce. To ensure a safe and dignified work environment, and to facilitate overall socio-economic empowerment of women, India has enacted a law requiring employers to redress effectively complaints of sexual harassment, and to take other measures necessary for fostering a gender sensitive, safe working environment for women.

21. Government recognize that women bear a large share of familial care-giving responsibilities, which adversely impacts their optimal participation in the workforce, and is committed to restructuring of workspaces to make them more sensitive to women’s social circumstances. The Maternity Benefits Amendment Act, 2017 provides extended maternity leave, crèche facilities, and flexible working hours to facilitate equal access for women to employment opportunities.

22. India remains deeply committed towards reinforcing and accelerating the efforts towards combating human trafficking. Through amendments to criminal laws, India now provides stringent punishment for trafficking. India recognizes that a law enforcement response is only a partial step towards addressing the multiple human rights violations that a trafficked person suffers; various schemes are being put in place for rehabilitation of survivors of trafficking.

23. India has been at the forefront of recognizing the equal rights of transgender persons. In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court also recognized the rights of transgender persons under the law. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, is under consideration of Parliament of India.

24. India has made significant progress in addressing the special needs of persons with disabilities through its Accessible India Campaign as well as legislative action on the rights of persons with disabilities and the rights of persons with mental health issues. India remains committed to providing an enabling environment to persons with special abilities.

25. Recognizing people's right to a clean environment, India has launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Campaign). This is a nationwide programme that aims to facilitate collective behavioural changes regarding practices of sanitation through community-led initiatives.

26. India is proud of its rich and diverse cultural heritage. Safeguarding the rights of minorities forms an essential core of its polity. The Constitution of India enshrines various provisions for the protection of the rights and interests of the minorities. Article 16 guarantees that in matters of public employment, no discrimination shall be made on grounds of race, religion, caste or language, etc., Article 25 guarantees freedom of religion to every individual. Article 30 gives the minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. India implements various schemes for inclusion of minorities in education and socio-economic empowerment.

27. The right to free speech and expression occupies its rightful place in the core of the Constitution. As the world's largest multi-layered democracy, India fully recognizes the importance of free speech and expression.

28. Against this backdrop, India is presenting its candidature for the membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2019-2021 for which the elections will be held at the UN General Assembly in New York in November 2018. India makes the following voluntarily pledges and commitments:

(i) India will continue to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights;

(ii) India will continue to strive for the full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development;

(iii) India will continue to abide by its national mechanisms and procedures to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens;

(iv) India will continue to cooperate with States, upon request, in their implementation of human rights through capacity-building by means of technical cooperation, dialogues and exchange of experts;

(v) India will continue to strive to promote the work of the Human Rights Council in accordance with the principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect, cooperation and dialogue;

(vi) India will continue to strive to make the Human Rights Council a strong, effective and efficient body capable of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all;

(vii) India will continue to support international efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(viii) India will continue to engage constructively in the deliberations of the Human Rights Council, its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms;

(ix) India will continue to support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including through regular voluntary contributions;

(x) India will continue to cooperate with special procedures, accept requests for visits and respond to communications;

(xi) India is committed to implementing the recommendations it accepted during the Third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review;

(xii) India remains committed to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

(xiii) India will continue to cooperate with treaty monitoring bodies and engage constructively with them in the context of fulfilling its human rights obligations;

(xiv) India will continue to strengthen the implementation of the human rights treaties that it has ratified;

(xv) India will maintain the independence, autonomy and genuine powers of investigation of national human rights bodies, including its National Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Women, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, National Commission for Minorities, National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and National Commission for Backward Classes, as mandated by the Indian Constitution and national legislation;

(xvi) India will continue to foster a culture of transparency, openness and accountability in the functioning of the Government.

(xvii) India will continue to foster the genuine participation and effective involvement of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights.

(xviii) India will continue its strong support and steadfast commitment to work with fellow developing countries and the UN Development system towards collectively achieving the SDGs.

(xix) India will continue to pursue the necessary domestic actions to implement the 2030 Agenda, with overarching focus on poverty eradication and balanced emphasis on social development, economic growth and environmental protection.
