The Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights domestically and internationally. The Kingdom of Bahrain recognizes the important role of the Human Rights Council in this global effort. We believe that the Kingdom of Bahrain can bring a useful contribution to the work of the Council. Therefore, the Kingdom of Bahrain has decided to present its candidature for election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021 in the election to be held during the seventy third session of the General Assembly, fall of 2018.

Bahrain has witnessed political and legislative developments since 2002, the most prominent of which is the practice of citizens, both men and women, of their political and civil rights through participation in public affairs which include social, cultural, and economic spheres, and running for parliamentary and municipal elections and the legislative authority’s exercise of its constitutional right to oversee functions of the executive branch through their representatives in the Parliament.

The Constitution of Bahrain consists of principles of equality, justice, freedom and considers them to be among the pillars of society. There is no discrimination between them on account of gender or race or language, religion or creed.

The national legislation also reflect the respect for rights and freedoms. For instance, legislation guarantee human and social rights in areas of work and insurance against unemployment, protection of the rights of the child, the elderly and women, combating trafficking of persons, care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. To protect from family violence, to guarantee freedom of opinion, expression and belief, and to ensure the free and unrestricted exercise of religion and religious rights and practices in a framework of tolerance and mutual respect between the components of society in various religious, sectarian, cultural and ethnic affiliations. The national legislation also guarantees the freedom of civil society institutions through the formation of over 600 human rights associations covering various fields such as social, women’s, religious and others.

Building on these achievements, the Kingdom of Bahrain makes the following voluntary pledges and commitments for the period 2019-2021:

Voluntary pledges and commitments:
1. Rights of women

Pledge:

The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue its efforts to play an international role and share best practices in promoting the empowerment and equal opportunities between men and women at the national and international levels.

Bahraini women have obtained their full rights in the framework of equal opportunities and social justice in all fields in accordance with the Constitution and without prejudice to the provisions of the Islamic Shari’a. Under the support of His Majesty the King and with regards to women’s political rights, Bahraini women have stepped up to executive positions and proved to be trustworthy equals. In 2001, the Head of State appointed the first female Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Women; to become the first Bahraini woman to hold a ministerial ranked post across the Arabian Gulf region. In 2004, the first female cabinet minister was appointed as minister of Health.
And during the period from 2004 to 2017, the government witnessed the appointment of a number of female cabinet ministers in fields such as Social Development, Health, Human Rights, Culture, Information etc. Where their performance was characterized by discipline and high productivity in the sectors of which they occupied, reflecting thereby the level of competence Bahraini women have in general. In 2017, Bahraini women held (3) ministerial positions. They also represented 8% of the House of Representatives, and 23% of the Shura Council (appointed chamber of the legislative authority).

Moreover, the progress of Bahraini women at the international level is reflected in, inter alia, membership in international committees such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), where the Kingdom of Bahrain has been assigned by the League of Arab States to lead the negotiations on behalf of the (22) Arab States on the Agreed conclusions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women of the Economic and Social Committee of the 61st and 62nd Sessions consecutively; as well as the UN Women Executive Board, the adoption and launch of Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Global Award for Women Empowerment in March 2017, and the opening of the programme office of UN Women in the Kingdom of Bahrain in the presence of the Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN Women.

Furthermore, after years of consultation and study among all the components of society, the Kingdom of Bahrain succeeded in issuing the Family Law (Law No. (19) for the year 2017), in recognition of the importance of completing the legislative system of laws that support the stability of women and families. It has included comprehensive provisions, guaranteeing the Bahraini family all degrees of litigation to the courts of cassation in adjudicating family issues, and is seen as a reflection of national unity and social coherence in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

1. Rights of the child

Pledge:

*The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue its efforts to enact new legislation that will protect and guarantee the rights of the child and expand programs based on the welfare of all social, health, psychological and educational rights of the child.*

Recognizing the importance of promoting the children's affairs, protecting their rights and ensuring a safe environment that allows for the full development of children's abilities and talents and taking appropriate steps in the areas of health and education to take care of the psychological, social and cultural needs of children in accordance with their national strategy based on the best interests of the child. Training programs have been established for teachers of various levels in public schools, as well as the involvement of kindergarten teachers in a range of activities, workshops and training programs to raise their professional competence for educational and educational dealings with students in coordination with the relevant authorities. In addition to the establishment of a psychosocial counseling center to care for the psychological and social guidance of students.

The Royal Charity Foundation, established under a Royal Decree issued on August 14, 2001, sponsor orphans who have lost their parents. His Majesty the King holds the honorary presidency of the Foundation and his son presides over the Board of Trustees. The orphans are given the personal care of the King, which is to visit them and receive them on a regular basis in addition to sponsoring activities for them. The Foundation provides educational support in the provision of school bags and the provision of free seats for orphans
in kindergartens in cooperation with kindergartens, companies and private sector institutions, according to the number of seats obtained annually and the allocation of another free number of orphans in private schools in cooperation with schools and companies and private sector institutions. In addition to taking into consideration their circumstances, the Foundation provides people to assist them in preparing for final exams through educational institutions. After the completion of their studies, 50 seats will be reserved for those who get 80% and above in public and private universities as well as other seats supported by companies and private sector institutions.

Furthermore, a number of cultural initiatives have been launched, including: an annual Ramadan competition called "#Hashtag", which is a 100% awareness-raising competition for children, aimed at raising children's awareness and enhancing their confidence. Other programs were developed to raise health awareness and improve healthy lifestyles.

The Kingdom of Bahrain submitted the fourth to sixth periodic report on the progress of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva (September 2017).

2. Combating Trafficking of persons

_Pledge:_

_The Kingdom of Bahrain will strengthen its national anti-trafficking strategies and support United Nations efforts as well as exchange best practices to combat trafficking of persons._

Believing that the issue of trafficking in persons is a challenge that requires concerted national efforts to keep the Kingdom of Bahrain free from all types and manifestations of this global crime, and to address them and develop mechanisms to eliminate them in the event of indications of their existence, the Kingdom of Bahrain has taken a set of measures to ensure coordination and cooperation between the parties governmental and civil society to combat this crime within the visions and mechanisms contained in the national strategy to combat trafficking of persons.

In May 2017, the "National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking of Persons", the first of its kind in the region, was launched. The system aims at strengthening measures to combat trafficking of persons, clarifying and regulating the role of different agencies and their mechanisms in dealing with any trafficking situation or suspected trafficking.

To assess the status of foreign victims of trafficking of persons, and in accordance with Ministerial Decree No. (4) for the year 2017, the National Committee to Combat Trafficking of Persons has been re-established and is currently chaired by the Labour Market Regulatory Authority. The committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecution etc., along with representatives from non-governmental organizations. The committee examines all reports concerning victims, hears their statements or their legal representatives' and removes any obstacles that may prevent foreign victims obtaining work if this is deemed necessary on the basis of what the chair of the committee has been told by the competent authority in this regard. It coordinates with the Ministry of Interior to return victims to their country of nationality or their place of residence in any other state if so
requested, recommends whether it is appropriate for a victim to remain in Bahrain, adjusts their legal situation to enable them to work and refers this recommendation to the Minister of the Interior for approval. If the recommendation is approved, it is subject to review under the same procedure at least every six months.

The committee has opened a shelter for men and another for women that may have been exposed to trafficking of persons. The Ministry of Labor and Social Development is also building an integrated center for victims of human trafficking with a capacity of more than 120 pax.

The Kingdom of Bahrain takes pride in its international achievement as the first Arab state to reach Tier 1 in the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report issued by the US State Department in June 2018.

3. Rights of persons with disabilities

**Pledge:**

- *To continue the efforts of the Kingdom of Bahrain to promote the rights and integration of persons with disabilities in society.*
- *Continue to provide the special technical and accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in all state enterprises and public places.*

The Kingdom of Bahrain places great importance on the care of persons with disabilities, as it has gained further support and momentum in the framework of the comprehensive national reform project launched by His Majesty The King. All government institutions that have key roles in the rehabilitation process and civil society organizations, institutions from the private sector, as well as civil society and non-governmental organizations work in synergy, where roles are integrated in the form of a partnership system between all parties, to provide various types of care for persons with disabilities including social, health and cultural care, as well as rehabilitation and training for their integration into society and the labor market.

The Kingdom of Bahrain works towards increasing the participation of people with disability in the society and economy, this is evident by the initiatives launched by the Kingdom aimed towards this goal such as the adoption of a law requiring the issuance of a card to a person with a disability under which a reduction of not less than fifty percent (50%) of the fees imposed by the State shall be granted. The "Danat" project for the disabled to support and nurture small businesses for the disabled. It consists of setting up kiosks in gardens, parks and vital areas in the provinces of the Kingdom in cooperation with the Coca Cola Company and the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture, aiming at crystallizing the effective development role of the disabled and moving them from a receiving care to an active role of production and creativity.

The Award of H.H Sheik Nasser Bin Hamad for Disabled Persons Creativity is also an example of the steps taken by the Kingdom towards the inclusion of people with disability. The award displays the interest of the Kingdom in the creativity of the disabled, highlighting the capacities and creativity of the disabled, strengthening the competitive spirit among them as well as enhancing intellectual, artistic and scientific creativity and implementing this to deepen their development.
The Kingdom of Bahrain submitted the first and second periodic report on the progress of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva (October 2017).

4. Religion tolerance and freedom of belief:

Pledge:

- **The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue its role in supporting initiatives to promote religious freedom and eliminate any incitement to sectarianism, violence, anti-nationalism, religious or racial hatred, as well as expanding its commitment to defend religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence at the international level.**

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a model of the coexistence and harmony between the followers of different religions, sects and cultures, thanks to the openness and freedom set by His Majesty the King within the framework of his comprehensive reform project. Many initiatives have been taken in this regard, including the launch of the Declaration of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which calls for religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence throughout the world as a basis for promoting religious freedom, and the launch of the King Hamad Global Centre for Interfaith Dialogue and Peaceful Coexistence under the support of His Majesty the King, which is a significant historical impression recorded in the name of Bahrain, Arabs and Muslims.

The King Hamad's Chair in Inter-Faith Dialogue and Peaceful Co-Existence at La Sapienza University in Rome was also established to teach dialogue, peace and inter-religious understanding in November 2017. This initiative will give young people from all over the world the chance to learn the noble values called by in the Kingdom of Bahrain, especially in the rapprochement between the religions and doctrines. It will also shed light on the actions taken by the Kingdom to establish these values in the Bahraini society, in addition to teaching students values, ethics and tolerance among all.

5. Protection of workers’ rights

Pledges:

- **Under the laws and regulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom will maintain the rights of workers and monitor the relationship between the worker and the employer to ensure full compliance with the labor law in the private sector and ministerial decisions related to it in accordance with the relevant international standards.**

- **The Kingdom of Bahrain will publish its successful and pioneering practices in the field of reforming the labor market at the regional and international levels, namely the flexible work permit project for expatriate workers.**

Bahrain is one of the leading countries in the field of labor market reform and the protection of workers’ rights, namely the flexible work permit project, which is considered one of the best international practices, in addition to granting expatriate workers the right to
move from one employer to another without the consent of their previous employer according to the fair rules stipulated by law.

The Kingdom also allows all workers to benefit from the system of insurance against unemployment without discrimination based on their nationalities to protect the worker from destitution and need during the period of disruptions. Foreign workers, same as Bahraini workers, have the right to represent all workers in trade unions regardless of their nationalities. They also have the right to strike and defend their legitimate interests, to undertake trade union activities and to protect trade unionists from dismissal because of their trade union activity.

The Kingdom was elected as an original member of the Governing Body of the International Labor Organization (ILO) within the Government Group for the 2017-2020 Session in the elections held during the 106th Session of the International Labor Conference in June 2017. Reflecting Bahrain's growing international standing and confidence, as well as the appreciation and recognition of OIC Member States for their outstanding efforts and achievements in the field of labor.

6. Cooperation with United Nations, OHCHR, HRC and humanitarian Organizations

Pledge:

- **The Kingdom of Bahrain will carry on its cooperation with international organizations concerned with humanitarian issues and United Nations human rights treaty bodies.**
- **The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue to cooperate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the specialized agencies of the United Nations with regard to meeting its training needs in the protection of human rights, building national capacity and raising public awareness as well as develop national plans to protect and promote human rights.**
- **The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue to strengthen human rights bodies in their preventative and protective activities, such as the National Human Rights Institution, Prisoners & Detainees Rights Commission, Special Investigation Unit and the Ombudsman.**

The Kingdom of Bahrain has continued to contribute financially to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as to other programs, on an ongoing basis. Such contributions are intended to strengthen the work of the Office and the implementation of its programs.

7. Sustainable Development Goals 2030

Pledge:

*The Kingdom of Bahrain will take concrete steps to continue the national development process under the support of the Government's leading programs to implement and raise awareness of the sustainable development goals 2030.*

Building on its experience in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) before its target date of 2015, the Kingdom of Bahrain has taken several steps to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. The Kingdom has paid great attention to these goals and has been strongly
committed to achieving them since the endorsement in 2000. The Kingdom has achieved important steps, such as:

- Percentage of the population living in extreme poverty is zero.
- Average economic growth in the past decade stands at 37.4% and average GDP per capita is USD 22,000.
- Public expenditure on health, education, and social protection exceeds 35% of the budget.
- Basic education is free and compulsory. Net enrolment ratio for primary and secondary levels is 100% and 86.4% respectively, thus eliminating illiteracy. While KG2 enrolments is 82%.
- Healthcare is free and universal. Maternal mortality and that of children under five dropped to 28.6 deaths per 100,000 live births and 9 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively, compared with 226 deaths per 100,000 live births and 44 deaths per 1,000 live births worldwide.
- The Constitution guarantees gender equality. There are two committees instituted by the Supreme Council for Women to ensure equal opportunities and gender-responsive budgeting. Women hold 55% of the supervisory positions, with 53% and 33% participation in the public and private sector respectively.
- The private sector is a key development partner. It provides equal high paying employment opportunities contributing to lowering total unemployment to 4%.
- 65% of the population benefited from public housing services with five new sustainable cities being developed.
- The coverage of safe water, sanitation and clean energy networks reached 100%.
- The Labor Fund (Tamkeen) provides vast support to SMEs. More than 47,000 SMEs and 120,000 individuals including women, youth, and persons with disabilities benefited from its financial and training support.

8. **Follow-up of the universal periodic review (UPR)**

**Pledge:**

- *The Kingdom of Bahrain will ensure the implementation of the recommendations which were accepted during its third universal periodic review.*
- *The Kingdom of Bahrain will submit a voluntary mid-term report on the progress of what has been accomplished.*

In March 2012, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted to the Human Rights Council its second national report, which was adopted by the Council in May of the same year. In September 2012, Bahrain fully supported 145 recommendations, partially supported 13 and rejected 18 recommendations. In addition to this report, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted a voluntary report in 2014 on progress made on applying the recommendations accepted in the framework of the universal periodic review.

The Kingdom of Bahrain submitted its third national report to the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights in February 2017. The report was published in various newspapers and media and on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Subsequently, Bahrain reviewed the report at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on the 1st of May 2017.
The Council adopted the report of the Kingdom on the 21st of September 2017, where many delegates of the States participating in the 36th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva praised the position of the Kingdom of Bahrain on the recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on the Third International Review.

9. National policies and strategies

Pledge:

- The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue to expand the scope of the various existing national strategies and plans aimed to guarantee, propagate, protect and promote human rights.

Bahrain has drawn up several national plans and strategies that guarantee, assist, propagate and promote human rights at the national level. These include:

(a) Government Programme of Action 2015-2018, in the preparation of its work programme (2015-2018) entitled "Towards the justice, security and well-being of society", the Government of Bahrain therefore adopted the principle of balance between the potential and resources of Bahrain, the challenges it faces, the requirements and needs of citizens and residents, continued development and construction and an emphasis on the sustainable development of the Kingdom, at the same time taking care to promote individual rights, freedom of opinion and expression and respect for human rights and to work within a framework of constitutional and legal legitimacy.

In that sense, it is also taking the necessary steps to complete its review of the laws and regulations in order to ensure that their compliance with Bahrain’s obligations under international and regional conventions and treaties to promote freedom of opinion and expression, individual rights and combat discrimination in all its forms. Through the Program of Action, the Government is endeavoring to bring about a society in which justice, security, stability and prosperity prevail, building upon previous achievements in a framework that ensures sustainable development and provides the necessary services to citizens, diversifies the national economic base, enhances competitiveness, develops an investment climate and strengthens the role of the private sector and human resources, as Bahrainis are the pivot, essence and engine of development.

The aims of the program include the protection of the democratic political system and comprehensive development.

(b) Economic Vision 2030, in October 2008, a comprehensive economic vision for the Kingdom of Bahrain was launched to give a clear direction to the continuing development of the Bahraini economy, which, in essence, reflects the fundamental common objective of building a better life for all Bahrainis. Economic Vision 2030 was launched after four years of intensive talks with a wide range of opinion leaders in the public and private sectors, including government institutions, specialized institutions, advisory institutions and global bodies. It focuses on the formulation of a vision of the Government, society and the economy based on the three essential guiding principles of sustainability, justice and competitiveness.
A new national strategy in the government forum 2017 was launched, the forum will include a review of the 2015 – 2018 Government Action Plan, as well as the policies and procedures of various government bodies. By addressing a series of critical areas and topics related to the Kingdom’s growth, the Forum will act as an important platform for discussing the role of the public sector in delivering the Kingdom’s vision of comprehensive development led by His Majesty King Hamad.

The 2017 Forum will build on the success of the 2016 Forum, which resulted in significant advancements including increased government collaboration, improvements to public services, and the implementation of measures designed to boost productivity and address economic challenges. The annual event reflects the government of Bahrain’s commitment to facilitating long-lasting development across a range of sectors in line with the principles of justice, competitiveness and sustainability which underpin Bahrain’s Economic Vision 2030.

National Development Strategy 2015-2018, the National Development Strategy was prepared in connection with Economic Vision 2030 and is a road map for the national economy and government action. It focuses on consolidating the links between government policies and identifying the most important strategic initiatives to be implemented during this period.

Policies and measures have also been introduced to encourage respect and protect human rights. These include:

(a) Establishment of the High Authority for Information and Communications under Royal Decree No. 47 for the year 2013

(b) The launching by the Supreme Judicial Council of “future judges” project to train candidates for the judiciary in the capabilities and competencies needed by members of the judiciary.