Candidature of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the UN Human Rights Council (2023-2025)

Voluntary Pledges and Commitments

Bangladesh has presented its candidature for membership to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the term 2023-2025.

2. Bangladesh’s desire to serve as a member of the UNHRC emanates from its constitutional commitment to realize “a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens,” as stipulated in the preamble of the Constitution. The Constitution, the Supreme law of the country, serves as an important tool for the protection and promotion of human rights of more than 164 million people of the country. The fundamental rights that are envisaged in the Constitution reflect many of the human rights prescribed by international human rights law. It guarantees every citizen’s fundamental civil and political rights as well as ensures realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

3. A secular democracy, Bangladesh is firmly committed to the principle of a pluralistic society that is built upon genuine and constructive dialogue, and cooperation and mutual respect. Bangladesh considers all human rights as universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Bangladesh’s engagement with the human rights mechanism is rooted in its belief that the promotion and protection of human rights is best pursued through dialogue and cooperation. As a responsible member of the international community, Bangladesh actively participates in constructive dialogues with the institutions developed under the aegis of the UN, including the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms.

4. The Constitutional commitment of the country is complemented by a number of legislative and administrative measures and practical policy interventions, including

- **The Independent judiciary** that delivered the landmark judicial pronouncements and verdicts, through the Trial of individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and other international crimes committed during the war of liberation in 1971 by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT BD) creating a new era of justice for Bangladesh by ending a culture of impunity, and effectively ensuring right to justice of the people. In order to keep the judiciary department operational during the pandemic, Bangladesh, as one of the first few countries, established Virtual Court during the pandemic. The Supreme Court is also proactive in entertaining Public Interest litigation and passing orders to ensure citizens rights.

- **Strong and Vibrant media** that publishes about 544 daily newspapers, 357 weeklies, 62 fortnightlies, and 93 monthlies, telecasts freely from more than operational private TV channels allowing open and free criticism of the Govt. In order to strengthen the capacity of the media to continue their contribution as frontliners amidst the pandemic, the Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina allocated USD1.18 million to enable them to withstand the fallout from the pandemic. Access to information has been greatly enhanced through widespread and unhindered internet outlets.
- **Civil Society Organizations/NGOs** including 3,075 19 NGOs registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau to the promotion and protection of human rights of the people through various advocacy initiatives.

- **The Independent National Human Rights Commission** contributes with effective intervention where necessary to uphold the human rights on the people.

5. Bangladesh creates enabling environment through a **people-centric development model** to ensure enjoyment, promotion and protection of all individuals’ human rights. The country made impressive progress, particularly in last 13 years, in poverty alleviation and economic emancipation of its people, with poverty rate declined from 31.5 per cent in 2010 to 20.5 per cent in 2021. The National Social Security Strategy has been instrumental in being inclusive to leave no one behind. The strategy prompted various schemes in its social safety net programmes to include all vulnerable segments of the society i.e., disabled, widows, old aged, children and infants. In order to keep the economy afloat in the pandemic, the Govt announced 28 stimulus packages worth USD 15.5 billion. Our Social Safety Net (SSN) programmes have been expanded to cover 11 million people. Despite the COVID-induced fall-back, Bangladesh sustained a GDP growth rate of 6.2 % in 2020-2021.

6. Being one of the most **climate-vulnerable countries**, Bangladesh undertook a robust Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2030 and the Delta Plan 2100, created Bangladesh Climate Vulnerable Trust Fund, and is currently in the process of formulating its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to address issues related to rights of the climate affected people of Bangladesh.

7. Keeping **human rights central to its pandemic strategy**, Bangladesh launched a timely and free national vaccination campaign covering all its nationals and the forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar. Pending repatriation, Bangladesh has ensured all necessary arrangements to make the temporary stay of the Rohingyas-Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FMDN)- in Bangladesh safe and secure, despite resource and land constraints. In the face of enormous challenges of COVID-19 pandemic, the Govt did not forget to ensure their safety and welfare, remaining faithful to the conviction that ‘No one is safe until everyone is safe’. The Govt included this population in the national vaccination program. Moreover, to de-congest the over-crowded camps in Cox’s Bazar, the Govt developed a 13,000 acres island called Bhasan Char in the south of the country and spent over USD 350 million from own budget to develop this arrangement.

- Bangladesh, hosting one million of Rohingyas forcibly displaced by Myanmar, firmly upholds their rights to return to their places of origin in Myanmar. In this spirit, Bangladesh continues diplomatic efforts to secure their rights, primarily the right to safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable return to their homes in Myanmar.

8. Considering **education** as the most important foundation for the development of human society, and the right thereto as a broad but critical enabler of human rights, the Govt. made targeted intervention in education that witnessed commendable results in increasing enrollment rate in schools, gender parity (by bringing millions of girls into schools) and higher literacy rate through training 3,27,000 teachers, distributing about 400 million (tbd) free textbooks, providing ICT devices to 83,000 schools in the country. The Government is implementing National Master Plan for ICT in Education to facilitate technology-based education for children including remote education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government introduced the "Ghore Boshe Shikhi"
(learning from home) initiative operated through television and radio programs. Besides, Faith-based education system has been modernized; Mother language-based education is being provided for the citizens of ethnic groups.

9. To ensure **primary health care and emergency health facilities** for all on an equitable basis, the National Health Policy implementation succeeded in reduced maternal and infant mortality, increased life-expectancy at birth, increased longevity, improved child nutrition, reduced stunting rate of children under the age if five, and in Universal immunization. NGOs and private organizations are playing key role in support of the Government’s health intervention. Telemedicine service, satellite clinics and 24/7 health service call centers are ensuring health service to the grassroots people. As a key component of health policy, Bangladesh underscored utmost importance to the human right to have access to safe drinking water and already ensured for 98.5% people. Bangladesh is pledge-bound to ensure access to safe drinking water for all.

10. The Constitution recognizes the right to shelter as a basic necessity. To gradually ensure housing for all people, the "Ashrayan" project of the Govt. delivered houses to more than 500,000 families. More than 1 million families have received houses since 1996.

11. To **empower women**, the Government increased women’s reserved seats in national parliament to 50; earmarked 30% seats in local government bodies; ensured Gender budgeting, special loans, micro-finance and similar initiatives for women's financial inclusion. Today, 20 million women are engaged in agriculture, industry and service sectors. Over 3.5 million women are working in ready-made garments sector, the largest export earning source of the country. The Govt. made special allocation for women-led SME sector; introduced special skill projects in all districts and announced interest-free mortgage and loan facilities for women entrepreneurs. SDG 5 has been fully integrated into its national plans, policies, and programmes.

12. To prevent and redress **violence against women and children**, the Govt of Bangladesh framed a robust legal framework, through enacting the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act; Human Trafficking (Deterrence and Suppression) Act, Pornography Control Act, Children Act, Child Marriage Restraint Act and Dowry Prohibition Act, ensuring full implementation thereof. The Govt. established a special tribunal in each district for expeditious trial of the cases of violence against women and children; introduced 24/7 hotline of Police, set up Toll-free hotlines like 109, 999, and 333 to extend instant support to the victims. The Govt. has also taken steps to amend the Evidence Act to further ensure women’s rights.

13. An early signatory of the Convention on the **Rights of the Child**, Bangladesh formulated its first Children Act in 1974. The Children Act has also been enacted anew to meet modern day challenges and secure the rights of the children. Further, to realize all rights of child, Bangladesh enacted a number of important legislations, formulated policies and allocated increased budget to address issues like health, education, child labour, child marriage etc. To counter the menace of child marriage, the Govt. laid a solid legal foundation, including the Child Marriage Restraint Act, Child Marriage Restraint Rules and the National Action Plan for 2018-2030. Also launched is a new campaign to help advance the 10-year National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage (2018-2030).

14. Embracing the values of inclusion, harmony and peaceful coexistence, Bangladesh attaches particular importance to the socio-economic development of the **ethnic minorities** in the
Chittagong Hill Tracts; maintains a ‘zero tolerance’ policy to any form of violence against religious minorities under any pretext; and promote religious diversity and inter-faith harmony, advocating the motto: "Each unto his or her religion, Festivals are for All".

15. Having the underlying philosophy of protecting people's rights, ensure accountability, and deliver citizen-centric services through technology, the Govt undertook ‘Digital Bangladesh’ initiative, that saw over 100 million internet subscribers in the country today. Bangladesh considers that right to information is an inalienable part of freedom of thought, conscience, and speech. Bangladesh realizes the right to information by implementing the Right to Information Act, which has established the Information Commission. In Bangladesh, access to information has been greatly enhanced through widespread and unhindered internet outlets.

16. Bangladesh’s commitment and compliance to her obligation to the treaty of the rights of the persons with disability is manifested through enactment of the Rights and Protection of the Persons with Disabilities Act, including such persons in its development plans. The Disability-related Coordinated Special Education Regulation in 2009 operate 62 special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, and 11 Special schools for children with Autism in eight divisional cities in the country. The Govt. also put in place strong legislations and programmes to protect people with disabilities and neuro development disorders. This includes support and learning centres across the country, and other referral services, including disability inclusive e-services”

17. The Government has taken special initiatives to ensure the right of the disadvantaged groups of the society. Recent policies concerning the third gender people such as recognition of third gender people, stipends for them, special tax rebate for the employers of third gender workers, their inclusion in mainstream politics are important milestones in this regard. Last year, the country had its first third gender TV presenter and a third gender mayor. The Govt. of Bangladesh has already placed the Anti Discrimination Act (proposed) in the Parliament and the Bill is now undergoing Parliamentary scrutiny after which it will be sent back to the Parliament for passing it as a law.

18. In line with its commitment to uphold labour rights and ensure workplace safety, the Govt. adopted an action-oriented time-bound road map on the Labour Sector reform (2021–2026).

Contributions at the International Level

19. Bangladesh firmly believes in multilateralism and underlines that promotion and protection of human rights may be best achieved through an inclusive and cooperative global approach. Bangladesh ratified and continues to implement eight (08) major human rights conventions out of nine (09) and continues to regularly report to the relevant Treaty Bodies on implementing these conventions.

20. Bangladesh attaches very high importance to the mandate of the UNHRC, and cooperates with the Council and its various mechanisms, including the UPR, Special Procedures, as well as Treaty Bodies to uphold its commitments under the relevant international human rights instruments.

- Bangladesh remains constantly engaged with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) through interactive discussions, as and when required, including at the level of Foreign Minister and the High Commissioner. The ongoing engagement
contemplates visit of the High Commissioner to Bangladesh soon. Bangladesh also fully cooperates with Human Rights Adviser appointed by the OHCHR in Bangladesh.

- As a recognition to the consistent devotion of the Govt. on human rights issues, and also the consistent engagement with the UN human rights mechanisms, the 3rd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Bangladesh in 2018 saw participation of 105 states, out of which 101 states appreciated, recognized and welcomed Bangladesh’s ongoing endeavours to the promotion and protection of by human rights. Bangladesh accepted most of the recommendations and is currently implementing those, with support from the OHCHR and other relevant stakeholders. Bangladesh also actively participates in the Universal Periodic Review of other States and provides recommendations to promote and protect human rights.

- Bangladesh fully supports and cooperates with the Special Procedures of the UNHRC and hold the visit of the Special Rapporteurs. Bangladesh has already welcomed the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

- Since 2018, Bangladesh hosted the Special Rapporteur on human rights situations in Myanmar for five (05) times. The new Special Rapporteur held a visit to Bangladesh early this year. Bangladesh also hosted members of the erstwhile International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, investigative teams of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, among others, to collect information and conduct advocacy for the protection of human rights of the Rohingya minorities. Currently the Government is facilitating the visit of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) to be held early this year.


21. Bangladesh is an ardent advocate of global climate change action. As the Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, Bangladesh steered the voice of the climate-vulnerable nations in the international platforms, including the UN Human Rights Council. Bangladesh notably contributes to the Council’s work concerning climate change. Bangladesh is the main sponsor of the annual resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change in the UNHRC and contributed to the creation of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of Human Rights in the context of climate change. Bangladesh's commitment to the vital climate change issue is manifested through her laudable climate actions including mitigation actions despite its minimal contribution to global GHG emissions. It was one of the first countries to submit its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the UNFCCC.

22. Bangladesh is the main sponsor of the resolutions on Protection of family; Human rights and preventing and countering violent extremism; Protection of journalists in situations of armed conflict, and Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

23. Bangladesh has been hosting over a million of Rohingyas from Myanmar who fled atrocities and persecution at the hands of their own people. In doing so, the country saved millions of lives
that could have otherwise been perished. Despite multiple challenges, the Government of Bangladesh has been providing the Rohingyas with shelter, food, health, and other essential services. The country has set another example of humanity by developing an island Bhashan char with adequate amenities. The Rohingyas are brought under the country's COVID 19 vaccination programme. The Government has decided to provide them with education in Myanmar curriculum in Myanmar language and skills. Bangladesh firmly upholds the rights of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas to return to their places of origin in Myanmar. In this spirit, Bangladesh continues diplomatic efforts to secure their rights, primarily the right to safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable return to their homes in Myanmar. At the same time, Bangladesh remains constructively engaged with the international accountability mechanisms for ensuring justice and accountability of these persecuted people.

24. Bangladesh played an active role during the negotiation and adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, particularly in incorporating the human rights of migrants as a central element of the Compact. As a signatory of the Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW), Bangladesh actively promotes the rights of migrant workers and their families throughout the entire migration cycle. Bangladesh twice served as a member of the CMW.

25. Bangladesh has been leading troops and police contributing country to UN peacekeeping. It makes voluntary contributions to the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Bangladesh is also the flag-bearer of the norm-setting resolution on “Culture of Peace” in the United Nations. In 1999, Bangladesh took the lead in introducing the normative agenda item “Culture of Peace” in the General Assembly and followed up with the flagship resolution entitled “Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace”. Since then, Bangladesh has been facilitating this resolution every year.

26. In line with its "zero tolerance" policy to any kind of sexual violence and abuse, Bangladesh responded positively to the call of the UN Secretary-General to end sexual exploitation and abuse.

27. The Government of Bangladesh maintains a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach to terrorism and violent extremism. Bangladesh has partnered with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) to engage community-based organizations and remains a reliable partner of the UN in fighting terrorism and preventing violent extremism globally, regionally, and nationally by addressing its root causes in order to strengthen human rights.

28. Bangladesh holds that, the ultimate guarantee of security and human rights lies only in the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Towards this end, we are among the first 50 countries that have ratified the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

**Voluntary Pledges and Commitments**

Bangladesh makes the following voluntary pledges and commitments:

**At the domestic level, Bangladesh will:**

1. Take initiatives to enact/amend national laws, develop policies and strategies aiming at the realization of the fundamental rights and principles as enshrined in the Constitution, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments to which it is a Party. At
the same time, consider acceding to the remaining international human rights instruments, based on consensus forged through national consultation processes, as appropriate.

2. Continue to cooperate and engage with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Council and other UN human rights mechanisms to further improve human rights situations;

3. Further empower and enhance the operational effectiveness of the Statutory and watchdog bodies, such as the National Human Rights Commission, National Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, Public Service Commission and Information Commission in accordance with their mandates through the provision of adequate human and financial resources;

4. Develop a National Action Plan for human rights, based on consensus forged through national consultation processes, as appropriate, to set strategic direction for the promotion and protection of human rights and identify key priorities in accordance with its national and international obligations;

5. Ensure effective Parliamentary oversight, including through the Parliamentary Standing Committees, and enhance transparency and accountability of public accounts and further strive to end corruption in public and private sectors;

8. Continue its pro-people developmental agenda with particular attention to women, children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable sections of the population, including through the sustained application and innovation of home-grown concepts;

9. Continue to enhance the multi-stakeholder consultations involving civil society representatives, NGO representatives, academia and other partners in the process of policy formulation;

10. Enactment of the Anti-discriminatory law.


12. Continue to promote and protect the rights of the religious and ethnic minorities and work towards maintaining the traditional communal harmony by upholding the secular, pluralist and inclusive values of the State and the society.

13. Strengthen efforts to promote and protect workers' rights and progressively realize decent work conditions through implementation of the action-oriented Road Map on Labour Sector 2021-2026;

14. Continue to take adequate social and developmental measures for promoting the education and wellbeing of women and girls with a view to ending child marriage;

15. Develop an anti-rape and child protection device to ensure emergency support to the victim;

16. Take initiatives/actions to raise women’s participation in the workforce to 50:50 by 2041, in line with the commitment made at the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Conference;

17. Take initiatives/actions to ensure gender equality in ICT sector by 2041, in line with the commitment made the Generational Equality Forum in Paris.

18. Continue to work hard towards achieving long term food security in line with the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2020 and its Plan of Action (2021-2031);

19. Implement the 'Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan -2030' focusing on green growth, resilient infrastructure, and renewable energy;

20. Ensure free space for the media to operate and thrive and to maintaining a healthy professional relationship with the press;

21. Continue to create awareness through media campaigns, seminars and workshops, and introduction of human rights education in academic and training institutions, specially for judges, public prosecutors, lawyers, Law enforcement agencies journalists, civil servants, Parliamentarians, and the media;
22. Promote the role of women, youth, teachers, local leaders and other stakeholders of the society for preventing violent extremism and intolerance to ensure the enjoyment of constitutionally guaranteed fundamental freedoms.

At the global level,

1. Extend its fullest support to the Human Rights Council in its work and will continue to contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency methods of work of the UNHRC and its various mechanisms;
2. Further expand cooperation with the human rights treaty bodies, special procedure mandate holders and other mechanisms of the Human Rights Council through regular communication.
3. Engage constructively with all parties, on the basis of dialogue and cooperation, to resolve challenges to the full realization of all human rights and to prevent human rights violations throughout the world;
4. Continue to submit all periodic reports to treaty bodies in compliance with its treaty obligations and constructively engage during the reviews;
5. Continue to support the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds that can facilitate the promotion of human rights;
6. Continue to work within the council to further strengthen the groundbreaking UPR mechanism.
7. Promote realization of the right to development, as an inalienable right for all and support the ongoing efforts to develop the concept further and its operationalization, based on practical applications;
8. Continue to pursue the issue of human rights and climate change at national and international levels, including in the UNHRC, to further enhance the interface between the human rights and climate change;
9. Continue to promote and advocate for the human rights of migrant workers across the entire migration cycle;
10. Continue commitment to promote and protect rights of older persons including by engaging in the multilateral process for adoption of a legally binding instrument in this regard;
11. Continue to advocacy for a “culture of peace” and collective measures against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and protect the victims against such crimes;
12. Continue to work with the international community to create awareness about genocide and crimes against humanity, promote collective actions to prevent genocide and similar crimes anywhere anytime, and support initiatives to ensure justice for the victims of genocide.
13. Continue to work with the Special Rapporteur and also the International Accountability mechanisms to promote and protect the human rights of the world’s most persecuted people-rohingya.
14. Continue to promote women, peace and security agenda both at the global and the national levels.

Bangladesh is confident that with its deep commitment, passionate engagement and a wealth of experience, it will contribute immensely in the activities of the Council. Bangladesh looks forward to the continued support of the international community in its endeavour to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, including through the work of the UNHRC.