

**CROATIA
CANDIDATE
TO THE HUMAN
RIGHTS COUNCIL**



2017 - 2019





One of the greatest achievements of the development of human rights is the idea that human rights belong to everyone simply by virtue of being a member of the human family. Therefore, we all share great responsibility to protect, promote and advance human rights of all human beings, without any discrimination.

Dr Miro Kovač

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs



OUR CONTINUOUS & CREDIBLE WORK AT THE HRC

The protection and promotion of human rights are a core commitment and a priority for the Croatian Government in terms of both its national and international policies, exemplified in our constant support to, and engagement in, the work of the Human Rights Council, as well as other UN bodies dealing with human rights such as the UN General Assembly, the Third Committee and the Security Council.

Following our ambition to more effectively contribute to the activities of the Council, in 2012 Croatia decided to put forward its HRC candidature for the term 2017-2019. Although Croatia has not yet been a member of the Council, it has actively contributed to the Council's work through various activities, such as drafting the Resolution on conscientious objection to military service (the resolution introduced the link between serving the military and freedom of thought, conscience and religion for the first time into the Council's agenda). In a genuine spirit of cooperation and solidarity, Croatia will continue to cooperate with other Council members to ensure its efficiency and impactful work.

From the very beginning, Croatia accepted the Standing Invitation to all the Thematic Procedures of the Council to visit Croatian institutions and examine the level of human rights protection in practice. The second Universal Periodic Review of Croatia took place under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council in May 2015. Croatia accepted the vast majority of UPR recommendations, and started working on their effective implementation.

Croatia also commends and supports the mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, its independence and integrity, as well as its "Agenda for Change" initiative.

In facing new challenges, most particularly those relating to migration, security, and the need to better protect civil society, Croatia is determined to further strengthen the protection of the rights of women and of the most vulnerable groups, particularly children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, civilians in armed conflicts and migrants.

Croatia is party to key international human rights instruments and has so far proudly assumed duties in numerous UN bodies, such as ECOSOC, the Security Council, Commission on the Status of Women, UNICEF Executive Board and UN Women Executive Board among others, and is willing to further strengthen the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights through its active membership in the Council.

EFFICIENT, OBJECTIVE AND PROACTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- Croatia will work hard to ensure an efficient and proactive Council, in its role as a transparent and objective human rights forum.
- Croatia supports the Council's role as the guardian of the implementation of international human rights standards, both at the national and global level; and to this aim it will encourage UN Member States to improve the human rights situation on the ground.
- Croatia will continue to support a comprehensive approach to human rights which recognises ties between peace, security, development and human rights.



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- Croatia will engage in enhancing the ability of the Council to address the need of UN Member States to effectively implement UPR and Special Procedures recommendations and resolutions of the Council, and to strengthen it as a platform for the exchange of best practices in fostering human rights.
- Croatia welcomes the contribution of civil society and independent national human rights institutions to the Council's work, taking into account their advisory capacity in acknowledging and remedying human rights violations.
- Croatia is devoted to the strengthening of the UN system through its principled and active membership in the Council. In line with our dedication to effective multilateralism and to the promotion of international rule of law, the three guiding priorities of our work will be: (1) protecting women's rights and the rights of the child; (2) fight against discrimination and hate crimes; and (3) protection of victims of conflicts and crises.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Protection and promotion of women's rights and combating all forms of gender discrimination and gender-based violence are among Croatia's top priorities, resting on our firm belief that the full realization of women's rights is indispensable for safeguarding human rights and achieving human security, lasting peace, and sustainable development. Therefore we:

- welcome the transformative action to mainstream gender equality in all three pillars of the UN mandate – peace and security, human rights and development;
- support the integration of gender perspective in the Council and its mechanisms;
- support the mandate and the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences - to further tackle gender-based violence which remains an obstacle to the realization of substantive gender equality;
- actively participate in the New York-based Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security;
- remain actively engaged in the implementation of the Security Council's Women, Peace and Security agenda with special focus on eradicating the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as weapons in conflict.



Croatia promotes the rights of the child and supports all UN resolutions addressing various aspects of child protection, including children's access to water, sanitation, healthcare and education. At the heart of our commitments are the principles of the best interests of the child and non-discrimination, which we confirm through close and successful communication with UNICEF.

HUMAN RIGHTS

ZERO TOLERANCE TO DISCRIMINATION, HATE CRIME AND HATE SPEECH

Croatia is committed to the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination, and is determined to tackle all forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia on the national and international level. To combat inequality, discrimination and acts such as hate crime and hate speech, Croatia has adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, which acts as a basis for the effective role of the Ombudsman, a central body for protection against discrimination.

Based on its national human rights approach, Croatia is committed to:

- **advocate** for the dignity of all human beings;
- **cooperate** with other UN members towards the implementation of the FORB resolution and the 16/18 landmark resolution on combating religious intolerance;
- **intensify** efforts for the universal ratification of CERD and its Protocol, to which Croatia is also a party;
- **continue** to make all acts of hate crime more visible and to hold perpetrators accountable, in line with respecting the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination;
- **remain** engaged in sharing good practices in multi-institutional cooperation in addressing hate crimes, building on our own effective example of setting up the Working Group for Monitoring Hate Crime Incidents, coordinated by the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, a central body for the collection and publishing of data on hate crime.



EFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF CONFLICTS AND CRISES

Croatia is dedicated to multilateral cooperation to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict and considers the full implementation and respect of international humanitarian law as crucial in this regard. In dealing with the current refugee crisis, Croatia is committed to fostering the rights of refugees and migrants, and upholds the principle of sharing responsibility in order to achieve effective cooperation.



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At the Council Croatia will be devoted to:

- addressing the issue of disappearances in conflict, based on our successful cooperation with the ICRC and the Council's Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, whose work we actively support;
- supporting the role of the International Criminal Court as indispensable to further protection of civilians in conflict;



- keeping the rights of refugees and migrants, as well as the issues of human trafficking and illegal migration, high on the Council's agenda;
- cooperating with international partners to alleviate the security and humanitarian aspects of refugee crises, and to deliver on obligations under international law;
- supporting countries in fostering the protection of human rights in efforts to address the root causes of migration.

Croatia advocates the humanitarian aspects of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and had the honor to host its First Review Conference in 2015 in Dubrovnik. We also actively support the Montreux Document.

THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA UNDERTAKES TO:

- **continue** to actively support a balanced, credible and effective work of the Council and of its mechanisms such as Special Procedures and UPR, as well as the reform and work of treaty bodies;
- **participate** in the elaboration of improved human rights standards based on its own experience, initiatives and good human rights practice, and to engage in a genuine dialogue with all Council Member States to achieve progress in human rights protection;
- **support** the mainstreaming of human rights into all aspects of UN activities, especially with regard to the protection of the rights of women and of the most vulnerable groups including children, migrants, refugees and civilians in armed conflict;
- **support** gender mainstreaming in the UN system, including the role of gender advisers in UN peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding activities;
- **support** valuable contributions by civil society organizations and national human rights institutions to the work of all UN bodies and agencies;
- **continue** its close cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in support of its effectiveness and independence;
- **remain** committed to the prevention of mass atrocities and gross violations of human rights, in the effort to ensure the protection of human rights both in times of conflict and in times of peace;
- **remain** fully committed to the request that Member States elected to the Council uphold the highest standards in the promotion, protection and further development of human rights.



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