

*Permanent Mission of Lebanon  
to the United Nations*

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The Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, with reference to this Mission's note #895/06 dated April 4, 2006, has the honor to remind that Lebanon presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council (HRC) at the elections to be held in New York on May 9, 2006 during the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Permanent Mission of Lebanon has attached an Aide Memoire on Lebanon's contributions and public policy in the field of human rights and its pledges and commitments regarding the Human Rights Council.

The Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

New York, April 25, 2006

H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan  
Secretary-General  
United Nationsm Rm. 3800  
New York, NY 10017



## **LEBANON'S PLEDGES AND COMMITMENTS**

### **Lebanon's Candidature to the Human Rights Council**

Lebanon's candidature to the newly established Human Rights Council emanates from its commitment to promote and protect human rights.

In this context, it is very important to emphasize the fact that the preamble of the Lebanese Constitution has raised Lebanon's compliance with the United Nations pacts and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the level of a constitutional obligation.

Lebanon reaffirms its strong commitment to the United Nations system and pledges to work closely with the newly elected Human Rights Council to secure the effective recognition of human rights and their utmost observance.

Lebanon brings a unique perspective to the global debate on human rights, which is based on the nature of its tolerant system, built on the interactive dialogue among the different religious groups which constitute its multi-confessional society.

Lebanon has consistently contributed towards the development of a balanced, fair, and effective international human rights system that works for the promotion and protection of all human rights through dialogue, cooperation, capacity-building, and technical cooperation. Lebanon played a key role in the elaboration of the Universal Declaration through a leading Lebanese figure, Dr. Charles Malik, who chaired the UN Commission on Human Rights for two consecutive terms (1951-1952).

Lebanon is among the pioneer states in the region in its commitment to the respect of human rights, reflected in its national legislation and adherence to all pertinent international conventions.

The Lebanese laws and Constitution provide safeguards against the violation of human rights. A community of human rights organizations and activists are operating in Lebanon, such as, *inter alia*, a National Human Rights Institution, set up in cooperation with the Lebanese Bar Association. In 2005, the Human Rights Parliamentary Committee asserted the importance of preparing a National Plan for Human Rights in Lebanon and put forward a programmed timeline, in cooperation with the UNDP program in the Lebanese Parliament and the OHCHR.

On the legal basis, Lebanon adhered to the core international human rights instruments, a list of which is hereby provided:

#### **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

- a) Lebanon acceded to the Covenant. It declared a moratorium on public executions as a step towards the abolishment of the death penalty in the future.
- b) The Lebanese Constitution provides for freedom of the press and speech. (Lebanon has a long reputation for being a regional media and cultural centre.) It also provides for the freedom of assembly and movement in addition to the formation of political parties regulated by the Association's law. Moreover, the Constitution enshrines the freedom of religious belief.

### **International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**

- a) Lebanon acceded to this Covenant.
- b) The Lebanese government is in the process of developing its own policies toward poverty eradication in line with the millennium development goals, and in cooperation with various donors, international organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP, and NGOs.

### **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**

Lebanon ratified the Convention. The Lebanese Constitution does not enshrine any one religion as the state religion; it officially recognizes 18 religious groups. The confessional system is supposed to provide reassurance to all of these groups so that none would be excluded from the country's legislative and administrative life. There is no unified personal status law; every religious group has its own, in order to avoid having one group impose on another personal status laws inspired by a different religion.

### **The Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

Lebanon ratified the Convention in 2000.

### **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

- a) Lebanon ratified the Convention in 1996.
- b) Despite the reservations entered upon ratification, the government is committed to the pursuit and achievement of gender equality. It is striving to take more steps to ensure *de jure* and *de facto* equality between men and women. The Constitution provides for the equality of all persons before the law; labor law does not distinguish between men and women. Women have equal rights to own property and adequate housing. Education is guaranteed for all with no discrimination.
- c) Women's representation in the administration is up to international standards. In the judiciary, it has recently grown. As for women's participation in the political process on the decision-making level, it is more and more encouraged.
- d) The Lebanese government established the National Committee for Lebanese Women to follow up on women's issues. A National Action Plan for Women was set up to empower women and challenge social discrimination through a variety of projects.

### **The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

- a) Lebanon has ratified this Convention, in addition to ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography in 2004.
- b) In 2002, Lebanon signed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
- c) Lebanon has achieved most of the goals of the World Summit for Children. It cooperates with international organizations concerned with the application of the rights of children, such as UNICEF. It is working in partnership with NGOs, private sector partners, and the ILO to create development opportunities for youth living in disadvantaged areas.

### **Conventions concerning Employment**

- a) Lebanon has adhered to seven fundamental ILO conventions concerning equality, the elimination of child labor, the elimination of forced labor, the right to organize, and a collective bargaining convention. In addition, it has ratified a number of Arab League conventions concerned with labor.
- b) With regard to foreign labor, the Ministry of Labor finalized a bill for the establishment of a new labor code that would cover some categories of wage earners not covered until now. It is taking into consideration new developments, and it is in conformity with the international and Arab labor conventions that Lebanon has signed and ratified.
- c) Concerning Palestinians, the Minister of Labor recently issued a decision allowing Palestinians residing and registered in Lebanon to work in around 70 types of jobs previously reserved only for Lebanese and for special categories of foreigners.

### **The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951**

Lebanon is not a party to this Convention, but the Lebanese authorities pursue a strategy of protecting refugees and persons who have entered Lebanon illegally. In that regard, an arrangement was concluded on 9 September 2003 between the Regional Bureau of the UNCHR to find temporary humanitarian solutions to the problem of persons entering or living in Lebanon illegally and who apply to UNCHR for refugee status, pending their resettlement in a third state or repatriation to their country of origin.

### **Right to Health**

Lebanon attempts to ensure the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. In this respect, Lebanon allocates a significant amount in health coverage with respect to its public spending.

The Lebanese Parliament has recently established a Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights, which embarked on a National Plan for Human Rights aimed at taking all necessary legislative measures to ensure the respect of all human rights in Lebanon as stipulated in international conventions and treaties.

### **Commitments and Pledges**

In line with its longstanding commitments to promote and protect human rights, Lebanon would like to participate and work actively in the Council and commits itself in particular to the following:

- To continue to promote genuine dialogues and cooperation based on mutual understanding and respect;
- To promote the establishment of an effective and efficient universal periodic review mechanism;
- The Lebanese candidature occurs after a successful visit to Lebanon of a Special Rapporteur acting on a thematic mandate. It is with the same spirit of cooperation and transparency, acknowledged by the Special Rapporteur, that Lebanon intends to engage with the Council's special procedures.