



## Elections 2024

**Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

**Human Rights Committee (HR Cttee)**

**Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

### *Questionnaire for candidates*

Four UN Treaty Bodies, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Human Rights Committee (HRCttee), and Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), will have elections organised in 2024.

In order to strengthen the treaty bodies, the International Disability Alliance, Child Rights Connect and IWRAW Asia-Pacific – as part of [TB-Net](#), the NGO network on the UN Treaty Bodies – seek to promote quality, independence and diversity of treaty body membership through transparent and participators nomination and elections processes.

This questionnaire, which is sent to all nominated candidates and is based on the criteria set forth in the relevant treaties and in the General Assembly Resolution 68/268, will enable all States and other stakeholders to better understand the skills, experiences and motivation of running candidates to CRPD, CEDAW, HRCttee, CRC and CESCRC in advance of the elections.

The written responses to the questionnaires will be made available on the website [www.untbelections.org](http://www.untbelections.org), while the video responses will be shared on a dedicated [YouTube page](#).

*This initiative does not imply that we support or oppose any individual candidates.*



## Questions for all treaty bodies candidates

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1. Name: Zeinebou TALEB MOUSSA

2. Nationality: Mauritanian

3. Current position: **Founding President of the NGO Mauritanian, Association for Mother and Child Health (AMSME in French), member of Defence for Children International.**

4. Do you currently hold, or have you ever held, a position on behalf of, or for, your Government (executive branch) that might compromise your actual or perceived independence and impartiality? If so, please give details:

**No, I do not hold a position on behalf of my government. I was honoured by the Ministry of Social Affairs for Children and the Family for my ongoing commitment to girls' rights in Mauritania in 2020, and I have been fighting independently of the Mauritanian government for the rights of girls and young women for 32 years, as evidenced by my [interview for Human Rights Watch](#) in 2018. I've been running a shelter for survivors of GBV since 2001, and I initiated the first version of the draft law against GBV in 2010. This subject is close to my heart and I am actively campaigning for the GBV law to finally pass through Parliament. It's a sensitive subject and I'm not afraid to expose myself personally. As such, I was a candidate for the European Parliament's international prize for open-mindedness in 2019, [Laureate of the Woman of Courage Award](#) by the US Embassy in Mauritania in 2017, and awarded the international "Koun Houran" Prize for good practice in protecting the rights of women and children.**

5. Please indicate any current or potential conflicts of interest that may prevent you from being independent and impartial in your work as a member of a UN treaty body:

**I was a member of the National Human Rights Commission, the National Torture Prevention Mechanism always as an activist/civil society member and human rights defender. I am currently a member of the National Observatory for Women's and Girls' Rights. I am independent and impartial, as demonstrated by my various testimonials for [Human Rights Watch](#) and [One Young World](#).**

6. Was the nomination process for your candidacy transparent and participatory? Were civil society and other stakeholders consulted?

**A broad consultation of civil society led to my nomination by the Mauritanian government. On the civil society side, I have the support of the [Defence for Children International](#)'s Movement, a leading grassroots movement working for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as other civil society organisations at national, regional and international level.**

7. During your potential term as a Committee member, what other positions or professional activities do you intend to undertake?

**I will continue my activism through my non-governmental organisation, a member of Defence for Children International (DCI) since 2015. I will also continue my activities as a member of the National Observatory for Women's and Girls' Rights since 2021, a member of the International**



**Network of Child Helplines since 2006, and a member of the World Coalition Against Child Sexual Abuse since 2010.**

8. Commitments as a Committee member take up a lot of your time, both during and outside sessions. How will you ensure that you have the capacity to devote the necessary time to the Committee's work, both in person and online?

**I have the commitment, availability and time needed to accomplish my mission, and this will not influence my work within my organisation, which is totally decentralised. Within my organisation, as President, I can count on the work of a professional and solid team in Nouakchott and in various localities in Mauritania. This will enable me to devote precious time to taking part in the Committee sessions, as well as outside sessions. I'm used to working under pressure, going on missions and taking on different responsibilities. I will take my commitment very seriously.**

9. What are the current and main challenges that you see for the treaty body system and what are your ideas for improvement?

**The current challenges relate to the lack of obligation on States parties to disseminate and implement the treaty bodies' recommendations. In addition, civil society's expertise in specific human rights issues is not sufficiently taken into account. To remedy this, the United Nations must create a system of incentives for States parties that meet reporting deadlines, implement treaty body recommendations and promote competition. The UN must encourage States Parties to favour proposals from experienced civil society professionals.**

**On the other hand, I am deeply concerned that OHCHR's Petitions and Urgent Actions Section continues to be under-resourced, leaving massive backlogs unresolved. I commend the Secretary-General's proposal to develop a case management system, which was echoed in the report of the co-facilitators of the 2020 treaty body review. States must adequately fund and support this crucial UNTB function in order to reduce the backlog and avoid the human rights protection deficit. In addition, CSO recommendations should be taken into account in decisions on modalities, and full, meaningful and secure civil society engagement must be enabled, with flexibility, inclusivity, accessibility and reasonable accommodation for disabled participants.**

10. Given the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide and the disruption of in person meetings of treaty bodies, will you be willing to adapt to undertake online work during your mandate, as an increasing way of functioning of the Committees?

**Yes of course, I'm used to online meetings. Although not ideal in terms of direct exchanges with States and civil society, I will adapt to the situation and health restrictions, the important thing being not to delay the Committee's work.**

Link to her [full resume](#).



## Questions for candidates to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

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Please provide responses that are as precise as possible and in no more than **200 words per question**.

### ***Your motivation, experience and qualifications to become a member***

1. What motivates you to be a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child? **(video option)**

I want to monitor and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at local, national and international level. My vision is that children, as human beings, should be able to enjoy their fundamental rights with dignity, in a just and responsible society. I am an activist for the rights of girls and young women in Mauritania. In 2000, I set up the AMSME association to educate girls and young women about reproductive health and rights. Early in my work, however, I realised that another issue - sexual violence - needed to be addressed urgently. So, in 2001, I founded the El Wafa center in Nouakchott to help victims of rape and sexual assault. I'm fighting to draft new laws on rape, which is not specifically recognised in Mauritania's penal code. I would like to put all my commitment and expertise at the service of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to make progress on emerging issues and challenges.

2. Taking into account the current composition and expertise of the Committee, what would be your added value? **(video option)**

As a woman from the north-west of the African continent, my expertise in the field has consisted in managing major programs for over 27 years to protect children against all forms of violence and discrimination, particularly sexual violence and children deprived of their liberty. Having developed socio-legal defence centers in my country, I have specialised in social, legal and psychological care for child victims of sexual violence and children in conflict with the law. I have organised regional debates on child protection and advocated for the follow-up of the implementation of the national child protection strategy.

At the international level, I have in-depth knowledge of the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (2019), as well as that on Violence (2006), and of course the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three protocols. I contributed to the dissemination and follow-up of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UPR and the ACERWC for Mauritania through the Coordination by Defence for Children International for the elaboration of alternative reports on the CRC and the ACERWC.

3. What do you think are the emerging issues and challenges in the implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols on a global scale as well as in your country/region?

Delays in the submission of reports by States Parties to the Convention is a challenge that hinders transparency, State accountability and access to justice and reparation for many victims and survivors. I am concerned by the accumulation of reports and the backlog of OPIC cases, as we have a duty to respond promptly to complaints of grave violations of children's rights. It seems to me that reform of the treaty body system is essential in order to achieve a more predictable periodic cycle to ensure the participation of NGOs and children. UN member states should increase their financial contributions to support the work of the treaty bodies.

In terms of emerging themes, I would mention the following:



- Violence against children (child marriage, FGM, sexual violence and abuse)
- Children deprived of liberty (children in conflict with the law)
- Child labour
- Children in the context of migration

The challenges lie in :

- Prevention
- Quality of care
- Non-application of laws.

4. What do you think are the areas where the Committee needs to strengthen international child rights standards?

**The Committee must strengthen international standards on the issue of violence against children, deprivation of liberty and the protection of children in migration contexts. I would like to stress the importance of the Global Study on children deprived of liberty's conclusions and recommendations, and the need for countries to implement them first at national level in order to generate widespread political will and mainstream the study's recommendations. This process begins with an assessment by each state of its own national legislation and practices, and the subsequent adoption of a national action plan tailored to the country's situation: taking into account the 6 areas of the study where children are deprived of their liberty. This action plan should consider how to reduce the number of children deprived of their liberty, while ensuring that this is done properly and that it is based on the voices and views of children.**

**To continue on the path towards long-term reduction in the number of children deprived of liberty, to ensure that there are real and effective alternatives on the ground, to pursue efforts to research and improve knowledge, and to continue to implement prevention initiatives that ensure fewer children are deprived of their liberty, the role of donors remains of the utmost importance. Part of the effort to create the necessary capacities can be strengthened by sharing knowledge with other countries and regions.**

5. How do you envision the work of the Committee in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

**The Committee has a major role to play in encouraging children's participation in achieving the SDGs, and in ensuring that they are both actors and beneficiaries. The Committee should recommend monitoring of the SDGs, in particular:**

- Recommend intensive monitoring of the achievement of the SDGs.
- Analyse mid-term progress and challenges.
- Recommend technical and financial support to States Parties facing difficulties in achieving the SDGs.

**Partnerships with children will be essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as they will inherit these challenges as adults. It is particularly important to ensure that these partnerships respect a rights-based approach, in line with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the nine core requirements for child participation set out in General Comment No. 12 (GC12) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.**



**While I have never believed, as a child rights advocate, that the SDGs would replace other specific human rights accountability instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, I believe that the SDG framework represents an excellent opportunity to integrate a different/complementary approach to the promotion of children's rights and protection into this effort by member states to report regularly on progress (particularly through their voluntary national reviews, known as VNRs) and their ongoing work to achieve the goals by 2030.**

6. How do you think the Committee could advance the standards and practices on child participation, and particularly children's right to participate in political life and child human rights defenders?

**The Committee could recommend to States parties the meaningful and effective participation of children in the development, monitoring and implementation of States parties' policies through children's parliaments and school clubs.**

**With the publication of General Comment 25 and the management of OPIC cases filed by children, the Committee has done excellent work in advancing standards and practices on child participation. Efforts to consult children and communicate directly with them should be pursued by Committee members through video messages and reports in child-friendly language. The Committee can work in synergy with the SRSG on Violence against Children and civil society to advance children's participation. The Committee's on-site sessions, as it has begun to do on an experimental basis, are also an excellent opportunity to broaden and deepen children's participation.**

7. What can the Committee do to further strengthen its engagement with civil society?

**The Committee should recommend that States Parties promote the effective participation of civil society in treaty bodies and in the follow-up to recommendations. On the other hand, the Committee should ensure that decisions are immediately and widely communicated with sufficient advance notice, and that information on any changes to future sessions is shared, together with an explanation of the rationale for the decision, in a timely manner to enable transparency and predictability of the process. As the cycle of consideration of State reports expands, consultations with civil society should be more frequent to ensure that the implementation of the Committee's recommendations moves in the right direction.**