

Mongolia

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Mongolia has made significant progress since it set out on the path to democracy, human rights and rule of law more than 30 years ago. In March 2020, the legislation on the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (NHRCM) entered into force, strengthening the Commission's independence. Some challenges persist for civil society organisations, media and human rights defenders. Vulnerable groups and persons belonging to minorities often face discrimination and there are recurring issues on the rights of the child and child labour. Effective remedies for violations of human rights are limited, and a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation is still lacking. Legislation that increased political control over the judiciary remained in place. A wave of arrests of political figures around the time of the elections in June was a cause of concern. While the death penalty no longer exists in Criminal Law, it is still referenced in the Constitution. Finally, as in many other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a challenge to human rights in Mongolia, with the impact especially felt by the most vulnerable.

2. EU action - key focus areas: The EU continued to focus its action on support to groups in vulnerable situations and civil society empowerment. A specific focus, reflected in dialogue with the authorities as well as in support to projects, was the fight against child labour and other forms of exploitation of children. The EU also refocused some activities in order to tackle the immediate health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: The annual EU-Mongolia Human Rights Dialogue was held on 25 November 2020 and it was followed on 3 December by the EU-Mongolia Joint Committee – both in a virtual format. The dialogue was the occasion for the parties to confirm their shared commitment to the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The EU expressed its continuing support for Mongolia's endeavours to promote human rights in the country. The two sides discussed potential areas for further cooperation, in particular the rights of women and girls and strengthening of the judiciary. The EU also raised issues of concern, namely that the death penalty is yet to be abolished completely in the Constitution, rights of the child, the fight against torture and the independence of the judiciary.

The planned public diplomacy activities, such as a conference on the rights of the child and the annual EU Human Rights Award were postponed in light of the restrictions on organising large-scale public events during the pandemic. The Head of Delegation delivered video messages to mark Human Rights Day, World Children's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. These are available on the delegation's social media channels and website.

4. EU financial engagement: In 2020, the EU launched its first budget support programme in Mongolia to boost employment and improve transparency in public finances, with an upfront disbursement aiming to address the social and economic consequences of COVID-19. Included in the grant is a technical assistance project with UNDP, FAO, ILO and UNIDO, focusing on transparency and oversight of the budget as well as employment creation in the non-mining sectors for youth and for persons with disabilities. In 2020, three new projects were launched with the overall aim to empower CSOs, strengthen labour rights and safeguard the rights of the child. The EU also continued to support human rights and democracy through several ongoing projects, carried out with Member States or other partners. The focus included: support to the empowerment of herders; the fight against child labour and

trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation; training for journalists on forced labour and fair recruiting; and support to civil society, including youth civic engagement and participation in local economy.

5. Multilateral context: Mongolia's third Universal Periodic Review took place in November 2020. Mongolia received 190 recommendations out of which 20 were noted, while the remaining 170 will be examined. Mongolia underlined its commitment to the Universal Periodic Review process, affirming measures, among others, to promote gender equality, combat gender-based violence and enhance the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). The recommendations that Mongolia noted focused on: the ratification of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; the ratification of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the reduction of statelessness; the rights of LGBTI persons; the abolition of the death penalty; and the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.