

EU ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD 2018 COUNTRY UPDATES

Mauritius

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Mauritius has a good track record of protection and respect of human rights. It remains the top ranking country in overall governance in Africa according to Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance. However, some challenges remain in terms of gender-based violence, domestic violence, protection of children and discrimination of LGBTI persons. The 2018 Gay Pride March was blocked due to opposition by some hostile demonstrators. A number of important pieces of legislation were still under preparation in 2018. The Declaration of Assets Bill was submitted to the parliament and adopted, but the Financing of Political Parties Act and the Freedom of Information Act have not been adopted. The Constitution Amendment Bill introducing the electoral reforms recommended by the UN Human Rights Committee (under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) failed to obtain the required majority. The Gender Equality Bill, the Children's Bill and the Adoption Bill, prepared with EU support, were not put on the Parliament's agenda in 2018. It is hoped that this could be done in 2019. A commission of enquiry on drugs submitted its report in 2018 after more than three years of work. The three reviews by Mauritius at the UN on CEDAW, CERD and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2018 led to a series of important recommendations in various fields.

2. EU action - key focus areas: The EU carried out activities in the following priority areas:

- Women's rights

The EU stepped up its engagement on women's rights with the setting up of a High Level Policy Dialogue on Gender with the Government of Mauritius, which saw the adoption of a Joint Monitoring Framework to track progress on the implementation of the EU-Mauritius Gender Action Plan. The EU carried out a number of activities in this field.

- Children's rights and combatting child abuse

The EU provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare for the finalisation of the Children's Bill, and the drafting of the Adoption Bill, including through a long consultation process.

- LGBTI rights

The EU engaged with local actors on this issue and funded an awareness raising activities as part of the project implemented by the National Human Rights Commission. The EU also organised jointly with the National Human Rights Commission a debate on promoting and protecting human rights of LGBTI persons, as part of the celebration of the International Human Rights Day.

- Rule of law and institutional strengthening

An EU funded project contributed to the capacity building of the National Human Rights Commission.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: The EU continued to engage in human rights and democracy promotion in Mauritius through the annual political dialogue held with the Government in June 2018.

The High Level Policy Dialogue on Gender with the Government of Mauritius resulted in the adoption of a Joint Monitoring Framework, which provides both the Government and the EU with an opportunity to monitor a number of key performance indicators related to the promotion of gender equality, addressing gender based violence, and the economic empowerment of women and girls among others. Through this framework, the EU will be working with the Government and the civil society for girls and women to achieve equality in all aspects of life: access to education, equal pay for equal work, access to top positions in companies and politics as well as protection from violence.

The EU also provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to draft the Gender Equality Bill, to provide capacity building in gender mainstreaming and to develop gender related statistics, as well as a number of tools for the mainstreaming of gender in the public sector. An awareness raising event was also organised in November 2018 by the National Human Rights Commission and the EU, attended by the Vice President to raise awareness on women's rights. A bracelet campaign against violence against women also marked the commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

The EU strengthened its dialogue with the human rights defenders (HRDs), including in the context of the UPR process.

As part of the celebration of the International Human Rights Day, the EU organised jointly with the National Human Rights Commission a forum debate on promoting and protecting human rights of LGBTI persons.

4. EU financial engagement: Since 2017, the National Human Rights Commission is implementing an EU funded project aimed at promoting respect for human rights in the Mauritius. The project focuses on rights of women, in a bid to sensitise people to stop violence on women. More than 4000 people were trained in the last eight months of 2018.

The EU also provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to draft the Gender Equality Bill, to provide capacity building in gender mainstreaming and to develop gender related statistics. Technical assistance was also provided for the preparation of a costed National Gender Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming in the Public Sector and the establishment of Technical Gender Working Groups. The Gender Equality Bill has not yet been presented to the Parliament.

The EU provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare for the finalisation of the Children's Bill, and the drafting of the Adoption Bill. These two draft Bills were elaborated after a long process of consultations with both Government and civil society.

The EU funded project implemented by the National Human Rights Commission includes awareness raising on the rights of LGBTI persons. In this context, the EU organised jointly with the National Human Rights Commission a forum on how to promote these rights, with high level panelists from Mauritius and from Europe, reaching around 100 participants.

5. Multilateral context: The year 2018 was active in terms of reporting to UN bodies by Mauritius. The country had to submit its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to the Committee on elimination of racial discrimination. The UPR was held for Mauritius in November 2018 and important recommendations were made, such as to increase efforts to combat all forms of discrimination, in particular against women, persons with disabilities and based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Many recommendations were made to end discrimination against the LGBTI community. Mauritius ratified the Rome Statute establishing the ICC in 2002.