

Rights and obligations

Italy's action on the field of human rights

Italy's action for the protection of human rights in the world includes in particular: the campaign for a universal moratorium on the death penalty; the promotion of women's and girls' rights, the campaigns against female genital mutilation and child early and forced marriages; the protection and promotion of the rights of the children; the protection of freedom of religion and belief and of the rights of members of religious minorities. At the same time, Italy supports a set of further initiatives in the field of the protection and promotion of human rights in line with the obligations assumed at the international level in terms of support of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. These initiatives include the fight against racism, xenophobia and all forms of intolerance, anti-Semitism, discriminations, including those based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the promotion of the rights of persons with disability, education on human rights, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law, the promotion of freedom of opinion and expression, the issues related to migration.

Death Penalty

Italy attaches the highest priority to the international campaign for a moratorium on executions. Since the 90s, thanks to the joint commitment of the institutions and the civil society, Italy has promoted several initiatives in favor of a universal moratorium on the death penalty. These initiatives led in December 2007 to the historic adoption by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) of the first resolution on a moratorium on executions approved with 104 votes in favor, 54 against and 29 abstentions. The Italian commitment was renewed the following year when, along with a cross-regional alliance formed by countries of all the areas of the world, Italy promoted a second resolution on the moratorium. It was approved by the General Assembly with a greater number of votes in favor and a smaller number of votes against. Since then, the following UNGA resolutions on the universal moratorium on the death penalty have been approved every two years with an increasing number of votes in favor.

In July 2014 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) established a Task Force with representatives from civil society organizations, in order to coordinate Italy's action and make it more effective in raising awareness of third countries to gain their support on the UN resolution on a universal moratorium, which is firstly discussed in the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs) and then in the General Assembly plenary session in New York.

Rights of women

Political, civil, social and economic development of each country can not take place without the full participation and the full involvement of women on an equal basis in the decision-making process, in the Government decisions, in the training and educational processes. Despite the important progress made in recent decades, women and girls continue to be, in many areas of the world, victims of physical and psychological violence, exploitation and execrable traffics.

Italy is strongly committed both bilaterally and multilaterally to the promotion of gender equality and of women's empowerment. Italy is part of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), actively participates in the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and supports the numerous initiatives promoted each year on this issue within the UN. Italy has played an active role to allow the entry into force (August 2014) of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and continues to encourage the widest participation to this Convention.

In the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which monitors the human rights situation in each State of the UN every four years in Geneva, Italy often addresses specific recommendations to third countries regarding women's rights and the fight against violence on women.

Italy is actively engaged in the international campaigns for the eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM) and early and forced marriages, not only at diplomatic and negotiation level but also through its development cooperation. Italy also promotes and actively participates in the negotiations on the UNGA and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolutions on these issues.

Italy supports international initiatives for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and emergency situations, and above all the “Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative” and the “Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies”.

Italy is also active on the topic “Women, Peace and Security” concerning the contribution of women in conflict resolution and in the promotion of durable peace, in line with the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the following resolutions. In this regard, within the EU, Italy supports the initiatives undertaken for the implementation of those resolutions. Within NATO too, Italy has strongly supported the implementation of Resolution 1325, by promoting it with Partner Countries, and by providing full support to the activities of the Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. Italy attaches great importance to ensure the full and active participation of women in conflict prevention, management and resolution and in post-conflict cooperation efforts.

At the national level, the third edition of the National Action Plan on “Women, Peace and Security” for the years 2016-2019 is being finalized.

Freedom of religion or belief

Given the several challenges affecting the peaceful coexistence of different religious groups in many part of the world, Italy is working with determination in order to enhance the international action for the protection of the freedom of belief and the rights of members of religious minorities.

Italy, together with the other EU member States, promotes every year the UNGA resolutions on freedom of religion or belief and on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion. At the European level, the “EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief”, adopted in 2013, enhance the EU action towards third States in the field of freedom of religion or belief. Italy promoted the insertion into the EU Guidelines of the relevance of the collective exercise of the freedom of religion, in order to protect the minority religious communities.

Italy strongly promotes a renewed action of the international community in defense of the cultural and religious heritage, which represents a key factor in order to ensure the respect for the freedom of religion and to protect the

historical and cultural identity of a society. Italy fully supports the action undertaken by UNESCO to protect cultural heritage in areas of crisis through the creation of a mechanism of intervention, proposed by Italy. In the context of the coalition “United4Heritage”, Italy and UNESCO signed also a Memorandum of Understanding which makes the Italian Task Force, with the participation of the Carabinieri for the protection of Cultural Heritage (TPC), available to UNESCO.

Human rights education

Italy supports the multilateral initiatives aimed at strengthening the promotion of human rights education. Human rights education represents a fundamental element in order to make everybody aware of its rights and of the tools which can be used to protect them. Human rights education contributes to promoting the respect for human dignity, fosters the development of a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding, contributes to strengthen the effective protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the public institutions and civil society. Education (which takes place in formal and informal educational institutions) and training (addressed to those who have responsibility for the protection and promotion of human rights in their jobs) concern all stages of life.