

Universal Periodic Review

(51st Session)

Contribution of UNESCO to Compilation of UN information

Mauritania

I. RATIFICATION OF UNESCO CONVENTIONS

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession, acceptance, approval or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	Ratification on 2 March 1981			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	Ratification on 15 November 2006			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)	Ratification on 24 March 2015			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960	Not ratified	Reservation to this Convention shall not be permitted		Right to education

II. REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Discrimination in Education (UNESCO consultations)

1. Mauritania did not submit a report to the 10th and 11th consultations on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination

in Education.

Constitution and main education law(s)

2. The [Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania of 1991, as amended in 2017](#), does not guarantee the right to education. However, it includes the principle of equality before the law without distinction of origin, race, sex, or social status (Article 1). During the previous UPR cycle, recommendation No. 130.44 called for guaranteeing the right to education for all in the Constitution, including free access to education for all children.
3. [Law No. 23 of 2022 on the national education system](#) does guarantee the right to education, but only for citizens, along with a principle of non-discrimination (Article 3). In the last UPR cycle, Mauritania was recommended to extend the periods of compulsory and free education (130.180). [Law No. 23 of 2022](#) guarantees compulsory education from ages six to fifteen, for a duration of nine years (Articles 3 and 26). This law also provides for free public education, though it does not explicitly specify the levels concerned by this provision (Article 5). However, the [2018 Law on the General Child Protection Code](#) explicitly guarantees at least six years of free primary education. The 2022 Framework Law on the national education system provides for three years of pre-primary education for children aged 3 to 5; however, it is neither compulsory nor explicitly stated as free.

Legal age of marriage

4. In the previous cycle, Mauritania was recommended to continue efforts to eliminate forced and child marriage, in order to ensure all children can access and complete education (130.243). To date, the [2001 Personal Status Code](#) sets the legal age for marriage at 18. However, the girl's guardian, or *weli*, may lower the age if he deems it to be in her best interest, without any defined absolute minimum age. According to the joint [CEDAW-CRC General Recommendation/Comment](#), child marriage, also referred to as early marriage, is any marriage in which at least one party is under the age of 18.

Enrollment rates

5. Most recent UIS available data for the enrollment rates is as follows:

	Pre-primary education (net)	Primary education (gross) 2023	Secondary education (gross)	Tertiary education (gross)
Girls	No recent data available	103.71%	No recent data available	No recent data available
Boys	No recent data available	104.31 %	No recent data available	No recent data available
Total	No recent data available	104.02%	No recent data available	No recent data available

Investment in education

6. According to UIS data, in 2023, public education expenditure accounted for 4.79% of GDP and 12.79% of total public expenditure.
7. During the last UPR cycle in 2021, Mauritania was recommended to increase its investment in education to prevent school dropouts (130.184). In line with this recommendation, between 2021 and 2023, public education expenditure rose from 1.89% to 4.79% of GDP, and from 9.10% to 12.79% of total public expenditure.

Gender equality

8. In the previous UPR cycle, Mauritania was encouraged to step up its efforts in the field of education, particularly in the area of literacy for girls and women, and in the fight against their school dropout (130.185 and 130.224). No recent data has been reported by Mauritania to the UIS regarding female literacy rates.

Teacher training

9. In the last cycle (130.186, 130.187, and 130.189), Mauritania was recommended to strengthen its commitment to teacher training. In this regard, the [2024 Partnership Compact](#) provides for a reform of both initial and in-service teacher training, through the implementation of an integrated strategy deployed at regional and local levels. Pedagogical skills are being reinforced to better meet the specific needs of students.
10. The Compact's priority reform aims to remove some of the barriers to school enrollment, retention, and completion of compulsory education. It seeks to improve teachers' qualifications and strengthen their competencies through a series of actions and measures related to teaching and learning conditions and environments, as well as to decentralized governance and school-level management.

B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Constitutional and Legislative framework

11. Freedom of expression is safeguarded under the Constitution of Mauritania, adopted in 1991.¹
12. In October 2006, the Ordinance No. 2006-017² on freedom of the press was adopted.
13. Defamation is considered a criminal offense under Article 348 of the Mauritanian Penal Code and offenders could be imprisoned for a total duration of six months

¹ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mau135226E.pdf>

² See <https://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/mauritanie-ordonnance-2006.htm>

to five years and be fined between 10,000 to 200,000 UM.³

14. The right to information is considered an inalienable right to citizens of Mauritania under Ordinance No. 2006-017.⁴ However, specific legislation relative to the freedom of information has not yet been adopted.
15. In 2010, the Law No. 2010-045 on Audiovisual Communication⁵ was adopted. The Law covers all forms of broadcasting and telecommunication means.
16. The Ordinance No. 2006-017 and its subsequent replacement Law No. 2008-026 (modified in 2010) created the High Authority on the Press and Audiovisual (HAPA) which is tasked with ensuring the independence and freedom of information and communication, in compliance with the law. In 2022, the law was further amended (Law No. 022-2022)⁶ to include digital media in addition to print and broadcast media in both public and private media.

Implementation of legislation

17. The High Authority for the Press and Audiovisual Sector (HAPA) supervises the broadcasting sector. In particular, it is responsible for nominating the heads of public media outlets. Under the 2022 amendments, four of the nine members of the HAPA board, including its chair, are appointed by the President of Mauritania; three are proposed by the President of the National Assembly; and two are proposed by professional media organizations.⁷

Safety of Journalists

18. Since 2006, when systematic monitoring began, UNESCO recorded no killing of journalists in Mauritania, on its Observatory of Killed Journalists.⁸

C. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS

19. The Constitution of Mauritania guarantees a broad range of freedoms, including the freedom of intellectual, artistic, and scientific creation (Article 10). There is no

³ ILO NATLEX Database : <http://www.droit-afrique.com/images/textes/Mauritanie/Mauritanie%20-%20Code%20penal.pdf>

⁴ See the Press Freedom Law (Ordonnance n° 017-2006 sur la liberté de la presse) at: <https://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/mauritanie-ordonnance-2006.htm>

⁵ See Loi n° 2010 – 045 du 26 Juillet 2010 relative à la Communication Audiovisuelle <https://www.coursupreme.mr/fr/docs/044-045.pdf>

⁶ See Law No. 022-2022 [https://hapa.mr/fr/sites/default/files/files/F\(1\).pdf](https://hapa.mr/fr/sites/default/files/files/F(1).pdf)

⁷ <https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/freehou/2016/en/113615>

⁸ Accessed on 15 May 2025.

reference to the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

20. Mauritania has acceded to the ICESCR, but it has not ratified its Optional Protocol.
21. In its Third Cycle National Report (2020), Mauritania made no references to the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits, or its inherent rights such as scientific freedom. No explicitly science-related Recommendations were made, nor were any Recommendations made in respect of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits or its inherent rights such as scientific freedom. Mauritania did not submit its national report on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers for the first consultation covering the period from 2017 to 2021, nor has it yet done so for the second consultation from 2021 to 2025.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

22. Mauritania should be encouraged to :
 - i. Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education.
 - ii. Guarantee the right to education in the Constitution.
 - iii. Guarantee the right to education for all, not only for citizens, in the legislation.
 - iv. Guarantee in the legislation at least twelve years of free primary and secondary education, and at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education.
 - v. Amend the legislation to ensure that the minimum age of marriage is 18 years old without exception.
 - vi. Ensure regular reporting to UIS on education data, especially on pre-primary education, secondary education and tertiary education, as well as on literacy rates for girls and women.
 - vii. Regularly submit comprehensive national reports for the periodic consultations on UNESCO's education-related standard-setting instruments, and notably on the Recommendation against discrimination in education.
 - viii. Share with UNESCO any relevant information to update its country profile on UNESCO's [Observatory on the Right to Education](#) and [HerAtlas](#).

B. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION

23. The Government is recommended to introduce an access to information law that is in accordance with international standards.

24. The Government is recommended to decriminalize defamation and place it within civil defamation legislation that is in accordance with international standards.
25. The Government is encouraged to assess the system of supervision of the media sector in order to ensure that this process is transparent and independent.

C. RIGHT TO FREELY PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY (CULTURAL RIGHTS)

26. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), Mauritania is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Mauritania is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, migrants, refugees, young people, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

D. THE RIGHT TO SHARE IN SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT AND ITS BENEFITS

27. Mauritania is invited to continue its efforts to ensure the full and comprehensive implementation and monitoring of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in accordance with the relevant Decisions of UNESCO's Executive Board (216 EX/Decision 45 of May 2023). In that context, Mauritania is invited to engage with UNESCO's Program on the promotion of scientific freedom and the safety of scientists and support the related Call to Action in line with the Recommendation and decisions of UNESCO's General Conference (42 C/Resolution 26 of November 2023) and Executive Board (219 EX/Decision 30 of March 2024). The Call to Action underlines the need to protect science and scientific researchers, and to allow for a free and safe science ecosystem where there is trust in science and where scientific evidence informs decision making. UNESCO stands ready to support Mauritania in developing and nurturing its science ecosystem, and protecting its scientific researchers, including through the incorporation of appropriate legal and administrative measures in line with international law. Mauritania is invited to collaborate directly with UNESCO, through its Secretariat and specialised Sectors, for that purpose.
28. Against this background, Mauritania is invited to consider the following:
 - i. Submit a national report to the 2nd consultation on the implementation of the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers in line with the

Circular Letter by UNESCO's Director-General (CL/4448 of 28 November 2024) and the guidelines contained therein.

- ii. Explore ways to strengthen the status of the right to share in scientific advancement and its benefits in its legal system, including in its Constitution and any other appropriate legal and policy frameworks.
- iii. When implementing measures to guarantee the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to information, and the right to education, include within those measures the freedoms indispensable for scientific research, and access to scientific education at all levels.
- iv. Expand input on issues covered by UNESCO's Recommendation in its national report to the UPR – particularly providing information about the implementation of the right to science and scientific freedom, including the latter in its report addressing more broadly freedom of opinion and expression. This will allow further discussions thereon at the Human Rights Council and the formulation of specific recommendations.
- v. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR.