

- EU-UNDP Insider Mediation (FPI regional) project also plays a vital role in conflict resolution, promoting peace and stability by empowering national mediators.

5. Multilateral context: Under UPR mechanism, several countries (including African countries) recommend to intensify the application of the 2015 and 2016 laws that criminalize child marriage and female genital mutilation. Also under UPR mechanism, The Gambia should take action on abolishing the death penalty, in line with its stated intentions and the UPR 2019 recommendations to that effect. In fact, despite the establishment of an official moratorium on executions, and the country's accession to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, courts continued to hand down death sentences. Prison and detention conditions in The Gambia can still be inhuman and degrading. Close cooperation between The Gambia and the EU in international in support of a rules-based international order and effective multilateralism with the UN at its core. The Gambia is member of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) until October 2024 and proved to be very active.

Republic of Ghana

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Amidst an increasing volatile region, Ghana remains a fairly stable and secure democracy. The country generally protects human rights by law and in practice, and took significant steps in 2023 towards the abolishment of the death penalty. Ghana demonstrates a strong record in upholding civic, political and other human rights. However, challenges remain about the monetization of politics, the protection of vulnerable communities, and the gradual closing of freedom of speech and association. The 2023 Freedom in the World Index classifies Ghana as a 'Free' country, with a global freedom score of 80/100. While encouraging, this figure obfuscates the increasingly restricted freedom of assembly. Despite this shrinking space, CSOs remain active and vocal in Ghana. By continental standards, Ghana has some of the lowest female political representation, only 4.1% of the elected officials were women in the December 2023 local assembly elections. LGBTI persons continue to face discrimination, physical attacks and harassment. On 28 February 2024, Ghana's Parliament passed the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Act, a private member's bill aimed at proscribing LGBTI activities, as well as the promotion thereof. Debated since August 2021, the Bill still requires the presidential assent. The constitutionality of the bill has been challenged since 7 March, and is currently being scrutinised by the Supreme Court. The continued pressure on freedom of assembly, the poor representation of women in politics, and pending legislation that would criminalise sexual and gender minorities, risk jeopardising Ghana's positive image on human rights. Ahead of the 2024 general elections, despite the solid track record of the Electoral Commission, its credibility, convening power and general performance of the Election Commission will be critical.

2. EU action - key focus areas: In line with the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 and the Country Strategy on Human Rights and Democracy 2021-2024, the six priority sectors of the EU are:

- Children's rights: Child labour and trafficking is still pervasive in Ghana, in particular in the fisheries, mining and cocoa sectors. To address some of these issues and as a result

of the Human Rights and Democracy (HRD) call for proposal of May 2023, the EU selected an action seeking to address child labour in the fishing and cocoa production areas in the Oti and Volta Regions.

- **Non-discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation and disability:** Despite general respect for democratic freedoms and human rights in Ghana, certain social groups, including LGBTI, persons with disabilities, minorities and refugees remain inadequately protected and respected. In 2023, there was a notable increase in anti-LGBTI statements by senior officials and religious or community leaders. Individuals with disabilities continue to encounter significant barriers in accessing essential services such as education, healthcare, employment, and social support on an equal basis. Members of the Fulbe community have long been denied legal rights, such as the right to citizenship or right to vote. The handling of refugees from Burkina Faso also presents a rising challenge.
- **Gender equality and women's rights:** Ghana continues to suffer from low representation of women in governance and decision-making and persisting violence against women and girls. Women represent 14.5% of the total number of Parliamentary seats (275) in Ghana, standing below the 30% UN-SDG minimum target.
- **Freedom of expression:** Freedom of expression, including for the press, and other media. In general, the freedom of expression, including for the press and other media is respected, although the number of abuses is rising. Despite this shrinking space, CSOs remains active and vocal in Ghana. The prospect of a new NGO bill is causing concern as it may create new registration requirements and enforcement mechanisms. The EU engages in regular dialogues with CSOs.
- **An efficient and accessible justice system:** On 25 July, Ghana's Parliament passed an amendment to the Armed Forces Act, 1962 (Act 105), substituting the penalty of life imprisonment for the death penalty for ordinary crimes. Both the Armed Forces (Amendment) Bill and the Criminal Offenses (Amendment) Bill, when assented by the President, would have to apply together to formalize the death penalty removal. President Akufo-Addo withheld his assent on the Ghana Armed Forces Amendment Bill, but committed to reintroducing the Bill in 2024. This step would take Ghana closer to becoming an abolitionist state. Ghana had not carried out an execution since 1993. However, on 24 January 2024, the High Court of Accra sentenced six Ghanaians to death for high treason for their involvement in an alleged plot to overthrow the government in 2021.
- **Institutional reform:** The 2020 EU Election Observation issued 18 recommendations including a mix of proposals for important legislative and regulatory change as well as a series of technical recommendations targeted at the Electoral Commission's management of the process. The 2023 Election Follow-up mission noted very limited progress in addressing these recommendations.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: Ghana is a preferential partner for the EU which partnership has deepened in recent years as illustrated by the visit of HRVP Borrell in October 2023. In December 2023, Ghana also hosted the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial that counted with the participation of high ranking EU official.

4. EU financial engagement: The EU has financial engagements in each of the areas of EU action (see above).

5. Multilateral context: Ghana's priorities at the multilateral level tend to align with the EU, particularly in the field of democratic governance, peace and security. Ghana has ratified 13 of the 18 key international human rights treaties. In 2022 and 2023, as non-permanent member of the UNSC, Ghana has been long advocating for UNSC reforms and played a leading role for the adoption, on 22 December, of the UN resolution on assessed contributions for African led peace support operations. In 2024, Ghana will trade its role as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for a seat at the UN Human Rights Council where it has been elected for three years.

The UN Universal Periodic Review for Ghana took place on 24 January 2023, with the report issued on 24 March 2023. The primary recommendations by the participating states focused, i.a., on:

- Ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- The abolishment of the death penalty through the signature and ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and
- Strengthening measures to eradicate gender-based violence, including by fully implementing the 2007 Domestic Violence Act.

Republic of Guinea

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: After more than two years in power, the transitional authorities maintained control over civic space, in particular by restricting access to the internet and social networks in mid-November 2023, as well as to the country's main private radio stations. This tightening of control came after the four main protagonists in the 28 September trial escaped from Conakry central prison on 4 November 2023. Despite these events, the 28 September trial continued and its holding in 2023 was hailed by observers as a significant step forward in the fight against impunity in the country. The lack of dialogue between the main political formations within the *Forces Vives de Guinée* and the transitional authorities continues to cause recurrent tensions. In 2023, incidents with the security forces, mainly in Conakry, resulted in the loss of around thirty lives. The ban on protests decreed in May 2022 is still in force. As regards the fight against corruption, results remain insufficient given the endemic nature of the phenomenon.

The implementation of the timetable agreed with ECOWAS has not seen any significant progress in 2023. The President of the Transition is committed to holding a constitutional referendum in 2024, and publication of the preliminary draft constitution is expected in the first half of the year. The consequences of the explosion of the country's main fuel depot in December 2023 are likely to weigh heavily on the country's social and economic situation.

2. EU action - key focus areas: Guinea remains a country marked by several Human rights violations, ranging from violations of political rights to children's rights. Women's position in