



Press release

Human Rights Council

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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL CONTINUES HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

Human Rights Council
MORNING

20 June 2006

Hears Statements from Ministers and Other Dignitaries from 16 Countries

The Human Rights Council this morning continued its high-level segment, hearing statements from Ministers and other dignitaries from Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Andorra, Croatia, Cuba, Estonia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Ireland, Ukraine, Yemen, Mauritania, Sudan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia, and Myanmar.

Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, said the new Council would fulfil the high expectations of the international community only if its work was based on the principles of universality and impartiality.

Ian McCartney, Minister of State responsible for Human Rights of the United Kingdom, said that human rights were essentially political in their nature, and they were the intrinsic business of every Government, without exception.

Juli Minoves, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra, said that never until today had human beings had in their hands the means to make a better world and to live in harmony, thanks to the development of ideas and technology.

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Croatia, said Croatia believed that the establishment of the Council would provide with a unique opportunity to further promote the implementation of human rights.

Felepe Perez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, said Cuba was a founding member of the Human Rights Council and the United States was not. Cuba's election epitomized the victory of principles and truth; it stood as

recognition of the value of Cuba's resilience.

Urmas Paet, Foreign Minister of Estonia, said that the Council should fully commit itself to the task of mainstreaming an effective coordination of human rights within the UN system, making recommendations to all relevant UN bodies.

Zst Skweyiya, Minister of Social Development of South Africa, said that South Africa's long road to where it was today provided many lessons relating to human rights. Its history of colonial conquest and racial domination had been the anti-thesis of human rights.

Turki Bin Khalid Al-Sudairy, President of the Human Rights Commission of Saudi Arabia, said the international community was currently witnessing a resolute and determined international will to promote and protect human rights in all parts of the world and in a manner more consistent with moral, cultural and religious values.

Noel Treacy, Minister of State of Ireland, said that through the Council, there would be a decisive shift to the effective implementation of the human rights standards crafted by its predecessor.

Borys Tarasyuk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, said that Ukraine believed that the Council would allow the United Nations to achieve a higher degree of efficiency, credibility and legitimacy in fulfilling its Charter tasks, as human rights were one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations system.

Khadiga al-Haisami, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, said the Council's programme of work should reflect a real balance between economic, social and cultural rights, on the one hand, and political and civil rights, on the other.

Sid' Ahmed Ould el Bou, Commissioner on Human Rights of Mauritania, said he hoped that the Council would base its actions on the principles of transparency, impartiality and non-selectivity.

Mohamed Ali el-Merdi, Minister of Justice of Sudan, said that Sudan hoped that the inception of the newly established Council would trigger a new and strong beginning for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Mladen Ivanic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, said the Council should be able to fulfil its mandate in promoting universal respect and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, said the new Council should encourage dialogue between all elements of the international community, and help reconcile national and regional perspectives.

U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, said that the global community would judge the Council by what it achieved in promoting and protecting human rights.

When the Council reconvenes at 3 p.m., it will continue with its high-level segment.

Statements

IVAILO KALFIN, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, said the new Council would fulfil the high expectations of the international community only if its work was based on the principles of universality and impartiality. The Council should function as a forum for constructive international dialogue and cooperation, and strive to provide that civil, economic, political, social and cultural human rights, including the right to development, were equally accorded serious consideration. The interdependence between development and human rights was self-evident. Without development there could be no enjoyment of human rights; and without human rights, development would be unattainable. Bulgaria attached particular importance to the establishment of the system of the universal periodic review as a new instrument in dealing with human rights situations around the world. It recognized the need to enhance the efficiency of the treaty bodies system, including through rationalization and streamlining of the reporting procedures.

The prevention and eradication of the practice of torture in the world still remained one of the challenges faced by the international community. It was the common duty of the international community to ensure adequate protection of all persons against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Bulgaria would support all international initiatives aimed at eradicating torture while ensuring effective remedies for its victims. The growing number of victims of trafficking and their suffering were, likewise, of grave concern to all. Trafficking was a form of denial of virtually all human rights and it required a comprehensive approach by the international community based on shared responsibilities and coordinated efforts by States and international organizations. To achieve sustainable solutions, policies and programmes for prevention, assistance and protection of the victims of trafficking should be carried out, taking into account the socio-economic root causes of that phenomenon. Another common responsibility that many countries shared was the effective improvement of the situation and equal integration of the Roma in all societies.

IAN MCCARTNEY, Minister of State responsible for Human Rights of the United Kingdom, said that human rights were essentially political in their nature. They were the intrinsic business of every Government, without exception. They all knew that every Government faced challenges in implementing their human rights obligations – complex challenges, that varied widely across the world, related to facts both within, and sometimes beyond, a Government's own control. They should not pretend that human rights were not about real human beings, nor about the States in which they

lived; that human rights did not flourish or suffer depending on Governments' policies; that they were not political; and that they were not difficult and at times, very difficult. To pretend that would be to build the Council on the foundations of a fiction – a fiction that they could not afford, either as politicians or human beings.

Mr. McCartney asked what they should do differently in the new Council. Most importantly, he felt, they needed to step out of the trenches of Commission thinking. They should no longer assume that one region's concern had to be another's taboo. First, they should recognize that it was legitimate to discuss challenges and concerns in a particular State. That need not be something to resist at all costs; rather, it was an opportunity to address those concerns together. Secondly, they needed to work together to develop more sophisticated and varied tools to support each other better in tackling real issues, and finding solutions that worked. Thirdly, they needed to foster trust and understanding. In particular they had to communicate better among countries, and above all across regional divides. They should talk about human trafficking, the protection of human rights while combating terrorism; discrimination in all its forms; racism, wherever it occurred; the right to development for all; the abolition of the death penalty, torture and violence against women; and the right to education and the rights of the child. But they should talk about them in real terms. Their debate should not be abstract. They must focus on how best to improve the lives of real people.

JULI MINOVES, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra, said that never until today had human beings had in their hands the means to make a better world and to live in harmony, thanks to the development of ideas and technology. The growth of ideas, and the painful recovery from the wars of the twentieth century, had allowed them to constitute a universal legacy for coexistence called human rights. Technology in all ambits could liberate them from the most basic needs and so allow a generalized raising of the state of humanity. But those of them who were here today – all the representatives and leaders of the peoples of the world – they all had to make that will, which they surely all shared, a reality day by day, in every little decision that they took in their countries, not just in great declarations. They must make human rights a rule of government.

Andorra was a little State, without an army, the strength or the geopolitical will to impose decisions on any other country or human group. But the Andorran people had worked to maintain, on a human scale, a small community in which respect for others was fundamental. Andorra considered the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as one of its priorities. Since 1993 Andorra had ratified more than 130 international conventions and instruments, and its Constitution incorporated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its text. Andorra celebrated the progress brought with the creation of the Human Rights Council. Andorra would be following with great interest the adoption, within the framework of this session of the Council, of the project for a Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and the adoption of the project of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Both themes had

received Andorran support in the framework of the Commission on Human Rights and of the Economic and Social Council on several occasions.

KOLINDA GRABAR-KITAROVIC, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Croatia, said Croatia believed that the establishment of the Council would provide with a unique opportunity to further promote the implementation of human rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and core UN human rights treaties. The Council would encourage States to accept and to abide by established human rights standards. The introduction of a universal periodic review should provide a transparent and objective tool for the assessment of the protection of human rights, at the national level, in all UN Member States. The Council should address the gap between adopted human rights standards and their implementation and continue its work on standard setting. It was also important that an effective relationship between the Council and treaty bodies be created. The credibility of the Council would, to a very large extent, depend on its determination to provide effective follow-up of recommendations of its various procedures. In the process of the elaboration of the Council's working methods, it was extremely important to preserve the constructive participation of human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations.

Croatia believed that the Council would be able to successfully integrate women's human rights in all its agenda items, as well as to focus its attention more closely on the violations of women's rights; retain and reinforce the mandates of gender-related special procedures; integrate the gender dimension in the mandates of all existing special procedures; and strengthen synergies between the Council and the Commission on the state of women. The Council was expected to be empowered to quickly and efficiently respond to all gross and systemic human rights violations around the world. Croatia particularly supported the adoption of the Convention on Enforced Disappearance at this first session of the Council that among other things affirmed the right to know the truth about the circumstances of an enforced disappearance and about the fate of the disappeared persons. Croatia would also support a full examination and strengthening of all special procedures.

FELIPE PEREZ ROQUE, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, said that Cuba was a founding member of the Human Rights Council and the United States was not. Cuba's election epitomized the victory of principles and truth; it stood as recognition of the value of Cuba's resilience. The absence of the United States was the defeat of lies; it was the moral punishment for the haughtiness of empire. Each one had gotten what they deserved. The African countries had recalled that over 2,000 Cuban fighters had shed their generous blood in the struggle against the outrageous Apartheid regime, which the United States supported and furnished with weapons, even nuclear ones. The election for Cuba came at a moment in which nearly 30,000 Cuban doctors were saving lives and alleviating pain in 70 countries, while the United States reached that stage with 150,000 invading soldiers, sent to kill and die in an unjust and illegal war. The election for Cuba came with its proposal for setting aside the trillion United States dollars annually spent on

weapons to fight off the yearly death of preventable causes of 11 million children under the age of five years and 600,000 poor women in childbirth. He just wanted to add that it was the Government of the United States, and not its people, which did not have a seat today as a member of the Council. Cuba would also speak out for the rights of the American people and, particularly, for the rights of its most discriminated and excluded sectors, he promised.

Mr. Perez Roque said that Cuba was perfectly aware, even to the barest details, of the secret agreement negotiated in Brussels through which the European Union undertook not to vote for Cuba and then work closely with the United States against Cuba's candidature. Cuba was awaiting a rectification to the attitude of the European Union, which last year had prevented the Commission on Human Rights from adopting an investigation into the massive, flagrant and systematic human rights violations at Guantanamo Naval Base. A rectification to the silent complicity with which they allowed hundreds of secret CIA flights carrying kidnapped people and the establishment of clandestine prisons on European soil, where prisoners were tortured and harassed. Cuba could not be counted upon to turn the Council into an exclusive tribunal against underdeveloped countries and ensure the impunity of those of the North. It could not be counted upon to use the new universal periodic review mechanism as an instrument of new pressures and media campaigns. Nor could Cuba be counted on to defend lies and act hypocritically. Cuba's cooperation could not be counted upon to relinquish a single principle. Cuba could always be counted upon to uphold the noble ideal of building a better world for all.

URMAS PAET, Foreign Minister of Estonia, said in its work to promote human rights, the Council should fully commit itself to the task of mainstreaming and effective coordination of human rights within the United Nations system, making recommendations, where necessary, to all relevant UN bodies. It was essential to establish and preserve the integrity of the Council, especially considering the high expectations vested in it. Estonia firmly believed that the Council's integrity would greatly depend upon its ability and flexibility to deal with all human rights issues, including urgent matters. The holding of the Council session throughout the years would certainly contribute to that goal, as would its close cooperation with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and civil society. Moreover, the Council's integrity was unquestionably rooted in the regular review of the human rights records of all countries, which would also be undergone by the entire membership of the Council. That review would, however, only serve its purpose if carried out transparently, fairly and inclusively in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. The Council should be made a forum for genuine dialogue and cooperation, enabling countries to receive assistance and advice.

Estonia supported the adoption, without delay, of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the result of long-lasting discussions among governments and indigenous peoples. Although the text, as presented, might not fully accommodate all expectations, it certainly represented a good

compromise establishing important standards to advance the rights of the world's indigenous peoples. Another issue the Council should pay close attention to was the fight against trafficking of human beings. It had become a permanent agenda item at the meetings of a number of international organizations. However, there was a need for greater awareness of the seriousness and complexity of the issues connected with human trafficking.

ZST SKWEYIYA, Minister of Social Development of South Africa, said that South Africa's long road to where it was today provided many lessons relating to human rights. Its history of colonial conquest and racial domination had been the anti-thesis of human rights. South Africa's struggle against Apartheid had thus primarily been a struggle for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, underpinned by a Constitutional order predicated on human dignity and equality, had placed human rights and fundamental freedoms at the core of its domestic and foreign policies. The first decade of its democracy had moved it significantly closer to the attainment of its vision of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and free South Africa. The sacrifice of all of its people but, in particular, the crucial role played by the women and youth of the country towards the attainment of that vision, had been profound.

Mr. Skweyiya said that South Africa welcomed the recent reform initiatives within the United Nations, which had culminated in, among others, the establishment of the new Human Rights Council. The elevation of the human rights agenda to the level of a Council was a positive response to the spirit of the preamble of the United Nations Charter and its determination to affirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. For the Council to be successful in its work, they had to recommit themselves with renewed political will to ensure a paradigm shift in their operations. Their previous commitments to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms should now be translated into concrete and tangible actions. The inherent weaknesses and lapses of the previous system, which had failed to timely identify and ensure appropriate intervention in the recent tragedies and genocides, should not be repeated.

TURKI BIN KHALID AL-SUDAIRY, President of the Human Rights Commission of Saudi Arabia, said the international community was currently witnessing a resolute and determined international will to promote and protect human rights in all parts of the world and in a manner more consistent with moral, cultural and religious values. The Council was convened today to begin the work of its first session with great hopes of confronting the numerous challenges that required from all concerted and well-intentioned endeavours. While all had great expectations of the role assigned to the Council to promote and protect human rights in an equitable and just manner that would accord equal importance to all civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development and the need to ensure respect for religious values and social and cultural particularities, one should not forget the pioneering role played by the former Commission on Human Rights, the countless achievements of which, over many decades,

could not be summed up in a few words. Since all human rights were universal, indivisible, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, Saudi Arabia emphasized its commitment to cooperate full with all members of the international community and with the Council in order to ensure the security, well-being and stability of all societies and to preserve the dignity and safeguard the particularities of human beings.

Saudi Arabia believed that, in order to achieve the purpose for which the Council was established, there was a need to maintain neutrality and transparency, to abide by the provisions of international humanitarian law, human rights law and the relevant international instruments, to engage in active and constructive dialogue, to avoid politicisation of the Council's work and to address the issues before it on an equal footing without selectivity or double standards, taking into account the fact that there were broad concepts and comprehensive, universal aspects of human rights that required truly judicious, objective and non-discriminatory treatment. Saudi Arabia derived its laws and legislation from the provisions of the magnanimous Islamic Sharia, which treated all persons equally and advocated tolerance and harmony among all mankind.

NOEL TREACY, Minister of State of Ireland, said the Council should make itself relevant by confronting the very real and practical problems the world faced today in ensuring genuine respect for human rights. Through the Council, there would be a decisive shift to the effective implementation of the human rights standards crafted by its predecessor. The compelling need for an effective international forum to advance the promotion and protection of human rights was self-evident. Countless individuals and communities throughout the world still lived in situations in which they were denied their fundamental rights. Some 300,000 children were actively involved in armed conflicts. Last year, between 600,000 and 800,000 people were trafficked across international borders. The number of people infected by HIV/AIDS worldwide had reached about 40 million. The challenge was to determine how best one could work in concert to improve the protection of human rights both in individual countries and globally. Ireland firmly believed that a renewed commitment to effective multilateralism was the best means to achieve that end. Over the past 60 years, the international institutions of the United Nations had grown and strengthened in step with human rights. The Council should preserve the best aspects of its inheritance, while being willing to innovate and improve where necessary.

The more practical side of human rights work had long been of greater interest to Ireland than the theoretical debate in that area, although those too had their own importance. Ireland was, in particular, active on the issue of human rights defenders. The work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders was a striking example of well-focussed activities by the UN special procedures and of practical human rights work with tangible benefits. Ireland would continue its partnership with civil society on human rights defenders in the context of the new Council.

BORYS TARASYUK, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, said that

Ukraine believed that the Council would allow the United Nations to achieve a higher degree of efficiency, credibility and legitimacy in fulfilling its Charter tasks, as human rights were one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations system. One of the primary aims of the reform from the outset had been to leave aside the selective, politicized and double-standard approach to the evaluation of human rights situations, for which the Commission on Human Rights had been widely criticized. Ukraine was convinced, therefore, that the Council's work should not lead to confrontation, but rather should be aimed at engaging States, through constructive dialogue and cooperation, to improve their record in human rights. It was important that they had foreseen putting such instruments at the Council's disposal as the provision of advisory services, technical assistance, and capacity-building for States concerned.

Since the Orange Revolution of 2004, consolidation of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms had been at the centre of the domestic and foreign policy of Ukraine. That had been clearly reaffirmed by the recent elections of 26 March 2006 to the Parliament of Ukraine, which had been recognized by the international community as free, fair and in compliance with democratic standards. Mr. Tarasyuk took this opportunity to extend Ukraine's standing invitation to all thematic special procedures and to always accept requests to visit from them. In that regard, it was important to extend the mandates of the special procedures, giving the Council an opportunity to carefully consider them throughout the year. The reform and restructuring of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, as well as the Commission's working groups, also deserved an especially thoughtful approach. Ukraine supported the establishment of a number of working groups, the adoption, during the year, of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, and to the continuation of the elaboration of the drafts of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

KHADIGA AL-HAISAMI, Minister for Human Rights of Yemen, said the creation of the Human Rights Council was a positive development which would give a big chance to correct the work in the field of human rights in a transparent atmosphere. There had to be more consultations, more in-depth study of the Council's work to make its vision a reality. Yemen felt that the participation of all countries in the universal periodic review mechanism was a significant step, and would establish the universality of all those rights. Yemen believed that good and altruism were a process that did not come to an end and that progress and success stories were many. These were noble and legitimate goals that could only be achieved in the framework of international law and the present framework of the Council. The Council's programme of work should reflect a real balance between economic, social and cultural rights, on the one hand, and political and civil rights, on the other.

Yemen was building its State and society on the basis of giving all its citizens

the right to participate. Yemen had started building the State on a democratic and pluralistic basis. Yemen now had more than 5,000 civil society organizations and trade unions. There had also been a very big increase in the participation of girls in schools at the primary level, as well as in universities. Women occupied leading positions, including in the Council of Ministers, in the Parliament and in the Assembly, and as Ambassadors. There was a serious national trend in Yemen to teach human rights curricula in schools and higher institutions. Non-governmental organizations and civil society had become a true partner to promote and protect the human rights of Yemenis. Ms. Al-Haisami called on all to work together under one umbrella to achieve human rights and development.

SID' AHMED OULD EL BOU, Commissioner on Human Rights of Mauritania, said he hoped that the Council would base its actions on the principles of transparency, impartiality and non-selectivity. By doing so, it would contribute more effectively to the promotion and protection of human rights and would favour a dialogue and understanding among civilizations in view of realizing the ideals of peace, development and respect for human rights declared by the United Nations. The Commission on Human Rights had carried out a lot of work during the last 60 years in promoting and protecting human rights by establishing standards to emergency situations. While it was true that today's consensus was based on the necessity to promote and protect human rights as a universal value, the implementation of these rights could depend on the level of the aspirations as well as to the efforts aimed at overcoming the obstacles at the national and international levels. At the international level, the guarantees for peace and stability and the installation of an economic environment which would favour sustainable development were essential conditions to attain the Millennium Development Goals and ensure the implementation of human rights.

Mauritania was today in a particular situation, which favoured the respect and the implementation of human rights, thanks to the peaceful change of the regime on 3 August, ending the economic, social and political blockage that threatened the existence of the nation. The fact that the population received the initiative was proof that the change was a response to the aspiration of the Mauritanian people. In addition, the Military Council for Democratic Justice was committed to respecting all international agreements and treaties to which the country was a party.

MOHAMED ALI EL-MERDI, Minister of Justice of Sudan, said that Sudan hoped that the inception of the newly established Human Rights Council would trigger a new and strong beginning for the promotion and protection of human rights. Violations of human rights were the hallmark of armed conflicts and civil wars. To end such conflicts and uproot their causes in Sudan, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Southern Sudan had been concluded, putting an end to the longest civil war in the history of Africa. A draft on the National Commission on Human Rights had been reviewed by the United Nations Mission in Sudan, non-governmental organizations, academics and parliamentarians, and would soon be approved by Parliament. Constitutional changes had

taken place following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement whereby it had been provided in the Constitution a Bill of Rights through which all human rights and freedoms were very clearly stated without any discrimination on the basis of race, religion, culture, sex or political affiliation. Those rights and freedoms were preserved and protected by an independent and impartial Constitutional Court. There was not a single political detainee in Sudan today.

Peace in Darfur was now a reality, following the signing in Abuja of the Darfur Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the biggest rebel movement, the Sudan Liberation Army, thanks to the sincere efforts exerted and help extended by the African Union and the international community. It was the absolute conviction of the Government of Sudan that only lasting peace and stability constituted the best means to ensure full realization of all human rights for all people. In that regard, the Government would like to underscore the vital role that had and that was still being played by the African Union Mission in Sudan. After the signing of the Peace Agreement in Darfur, that role had to be preserved, strengthened, augmented and encouraged to follow through. Sudan would also like to make it crystal clear that it looked forward to seeing a vital, constructive and objective role for the United Nations in Darfur. That role was to be agreed upon between the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations.

MLADEN IVANIC, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, said human rights protection was reaffirmed by the Millennium Declaration and was one of the most important tasks of the United Nations. The Commission on Human Rights had drawn attention to many human rights issues and debates, creating the culture of defending human rights in the world. The Council should be able to fulfil its mandate in promoting universal respect and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, to respond quickly to human rights crises, to address situations of violations of human rights, and to make recommendations thereon.

The situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was evidently more favourable now than two or three years ago, but there was still a great deal to be done in years to come. In all efforts to fulfil international obligations, it had significantly strengthened the state-level capacities for fighting all forms of organised crime, as well as developed cooperation with other countries in the field. The authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina had made great efforts to resolve the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons in the country. Great efforts had also been carried out at a regional level to implement the conclusions and tasks of the Sarajevo Declaration. Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the analytical-reporting sphere related to human rights, had fulfilled numerous important international obligations so far, and was determined and committed to persist in developing human rights standards that were universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

ABDELWAHEB ABDALLAH, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, said the election of Tunisia to the Council was a sign of confidence from the international community which could only reinforce Tunisia's commitment and

determination to continue its work to advance the cause of human rights, both at the national and international level. Tunisia was fully aware of the responsibilities incumbent to it, and the extent of the challenges that remained to be addressed. The decision of the General Assembly to replace the Commission on Human Rights with the Human Rights Council was a historic decision, and a decisive turning point which showed the growing importance which human rights represented today with regards to their global acceptance, and would not fail to give further impetus to the path towards full promotion and protection of these rights. Tunisia hoped that the Council, with the strong support of all its members, would be able to bring an efficient contribution to the international community's action aiming to ensure that human rights were intimately linked to the other imperatives for development and for the political, economic, social and cultural growth of the human beings, wherever they may be.

Economic and social rights, the right to education and the right of women to equality needed to be further defended or affirmed. The new Council should encourage dialogue between all elements of the international community, and help reconcile national and regional perspectives, and underline the duty for each State to promote all human rights and all fundamental freedoms. Development, peace and security in the world being today indivisible, it was incumbent on the entirety of the international community to encourage dialogue through the Council, with the aim of increased cooperation and a perfect and harmonious agreement between civilisations, cultures, and religions. The Council would no doubt give, in parallel to the action of States and international organizations, particular attention to other important questions, such as the promotion of education and the spreading of human rights culture and the role of civil society and the media, through the rooting of cultures of tolerance, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

U NYAN WIN, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, said that the global community would judge the Council by what it achieved in promoting and protecting human rights. In that regard, they could learn very valuable lessons from the achievements and the shortcomings of the Commission on Human Rights. One of its achievements was that it had been able to set up a commendable record of establishing norms and standards in the field of human rights. As a result, they now had a solid foundation of human rights instruments at their disposal. Despite those major achievements, the Commission allowed itself to be abused as a forum to vilify and humiliate certain States, especially third world countries. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the greatest achievement of the Commission, clearly emphasized the spirit of brotherhood in acting towards one another, they had witnessed or experienced discrimination and selectivity. Certain States, notably, developing countries, including his own, had been subjected to the injustice and indignity of double standards. The condemnatory approach that was followed by the Commission on Human Rights had to be replaced by a principle-based approach. The principles that they held dear, such as universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, should guide the work of the Council.

Myanmar was encouraged by the fact that the new Council's membership was based on equitable geographical distribution and every region of the world was sufficiently represented in the Council. It was noteworthy that the majority of the Council's members represented the developing countries. It was incumbent upon Council members to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and to see to it that under no circumstances would they succumb to and be swayed by the pressure of economic basis. Yemen now had more than 5,000 civil society organizations and trade unions. There had also been a very the past and would not disappoint the international community. Development facilitated the enjoyment of all human rights. The realization of the right to development was of paramount importance. One of the greatest challenges for the Human Rights Council would be to seek ways and means to better contribute to the promotion and realization of the right to development.

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