

Amb.
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Week against slavery

**HRC10: Interactive Dialogue with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Ms. Navanethem Pillay)
Intervention by Canada, March 5, 2009**

Thank you, Mr. President.

Canada thanks the High Commissioner for her first annual report to the Human Rights Council. This report, and Mme. Pillay's presentation today, highlight the important work being carried out by the OHCHR around the world.

Canada encourages the High Commissioner to continue to focus her Office's efforts on promoting the implementation of human rights on the ground, including through the expansion of the Office's work in the field. It is principally through this expanded field presence that the OHCHR can bring about tangible improvements in human rights situations on the ground. Canada welcomes the renewal of the agreement for the OHCHR country office in Guatemala. We encourage the governments of Cambodia, Uganda and Nepal to conclude agreements for the renewal of those country offices.

Canada welcomes the increased capacity afforded by the creation of the OHCHR rapid response unit, allowing the Office to deploy missions or mobilize surge capacity to respond to developments in Georgia, Kenya, Armenia and Burma, among other countries.

Supporting the vital work of the human rights treaty bodies and the special procedures are core functions of the Office. They should be assured the necessary resources to carry out their mandates, including for country-specific special procedures, which can play an important role in providing technical assistance and capacity building, as well as advocacy. We support the High Commissioner's efforts to strengthen and harmonize the working methods of the treaty bodies. The OHCHR's independent and expert support to the Universal Periodic Review is also essential to the credibility and effectiveness of this mechanism, which complements the work of the treaty bodies and special procedures. OHCHR can play an important role in promoting follow-up to UPR outcomes.

The annual report outlines the Office's efforts over the past year to meaningfully advance work on a variety of human rights issues. Canada notes in particular the work of the Office in the areas of prevention of genocide, combating impunity and promoting the rule of law, and promoting freedom of expression.

We welcome the High Commissioner's focus on eliminating violence against women and on protection from sexual violence in conflict situations, as well as the promotion of all human rights of women. We further welcome the efforts of OHCHR's country offices to systematically integrate a gender perspective into their work.

Canada welcomes the expert seminar convened by the High Commissioner on the relationship between articles 19 and 20 of the ICCPR. The clear majority of views expressed supported the existing international legal framework as striking the right balance between freedom of expression and combating incitement to hatred and violence. Our focus must remain on promoting freedom of expression, not limiting it.

In keeping with the reform efforts that recognized human rights as one of the three pillars of the UN, the High Commissioner also has an important role in mainstreaming human rights throughout the work of the UN system.

While respecting her independence and that of her Office, we welcome Mme. Pillay's commitment to hold regular briefings with all UN Member States on the OHCHR's work. This should be done both in Geneva and New York, as the UN's human rights work extends beyond this Council. We would also encourage the High Commissioner to brief the Council, as well as other relevant UN bodies, on urgent situations that require our attention, so that we can fulfill our mandate and react in a timely manner to protect the victims of human rights violations.

Finally, we also underline the important responsibility of the High Commissioner to continue to speak out against serious violations, as she has done in many cases, including with respect to Sudan, DRC, Somalia, Burma, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.

Thank you, Mr. President.