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**Statement
by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Russian Federation
Ambassador Alexander V. Yakovenko
at the High Level Segment
of the 10-th Session of the
United Nations Human Rights Council**

Geneva, 4 March, 2009

Distinguished Mr. President,

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last year was marked by the 60-th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This jubilee has allowed us to look back, to sum up the results and, what is the most important, to draw up plans for the future. Now it is time to implement them. To accomplish this task we need not only a good will of all parties concerned, but concrete, purpose-oriented actions on all the levels and directions.

We have all necessary instruments to solve existing problems in the field of human rights, and the most important of them is the UN Human Rights Council. For less than three years of existence the Council has successfully proved its soundness. It has not only passed through the difficult process of its formation, which we all have witnessed, but has really become a strong legal and institutional basis for promotion and protection of human rights. One can confidently say that the creation of the Council was an epochal event – the human rights within the UN have gained a new dimension, corresponding to the modern world's reality.

Mr. President,

The Council was created not merely for the elimination of well-known shortcomings of the UN Commission on Human Rights. It was primarily designed as a fundamentally new format, aimed at enriching human rights doctrine, strengthening and developing equal and mutually respectful inter-State co-operation in this sphere, involving of the widest possible range of participants. Indeed, the HRC has become an unique UN forum, on which States, international organizations and civil society institutions interact in open and sincere manner, sharing experience, generating new ideas and, which is the most important, implementing them in practice.

Mr. President,

The international community's trust in the Council is clearly demonstrated by the work of the Universal Periodic Review. Of course, it is too early now to draw conclusions, but the previous sessions showed that the UPR has every chance to become the most important international instrument of promotion and protection of human rights. We are glad that the review is running in a constructive, positive and truly working format, and the countries, participating in this process demonstrate their adherence to the common objective of ensuring human rights and their readiness for the concrete steps in this direction.

It is clear even now, that the good will of all States – both those being reviewed, and those making recommendations – is the necessary condition for successful functioning of the UPR. To make the UPR procedure truly comprehensive and result-oriented, all countries, without exception, must renounce momentary goals and attempts to settle political accounts. Recommendations should be adequate, responsible, avoiding double standards, politicization and preaching, taking into account the existing opportunities States have for their implementation.

Mr. President,

Both the Universal Periodic Review and the work of the Council as a whole would hardly be possible without the support rendered to them by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Russia welcomes and supports in every possible way the activities of the OHCHR and Mrs. Navanethem Pillay as the High Commissioner in particular. We believe that the work of the OHCHR should be further aimed at establishing constructive and depoliticized co-operation in the human rights sphere.

Today, while the global financial crisis is escalating, the Office needs the support of the international community as it never did before. On its part Russia is ready to continue to give to the OHCHR necessary support. At the same time, we call on the High Commissioner to keep on increasing the effectiveness of the

OHCHR, enhancing transparency and resolving long-lasting problems, including the one that a number of countries are underrepresented in the staff of the Office.

Mr. President,

The Russian Federation supports and will continue to support the consolidation of the international legal component of human rights protection. Today an extensive legal base is already in place, so we need to focus our efforts, first of all, on the implementation of existing norms, adopted by the international community. While elaborating new human rights standards we should fully understand the responsibility for our actions and their possible consequences. It is counterproductive to introduce to intergovernmental bodies flawed drafts that do not take into account positions of all parties concerned and have not received due consideration on the inter-State level. It is even more inadmissible when we speak about concepts, which later become a basis for legally binding documents.

Mr. President,

In the modern world the number of phenomena, which not only erode the international regime of human rights promotion and protection, but undermine its foundation, basic human rights principles and standards, has sharply increased. In particular, any one in this hall will hardly deny that one of the most acute problems in this field is racism, discrimination on ethnic and national grounds, xenophobia and related intolerance. This disease continues to mutate and reshape into new ugly forms. During the past few years this phenomenon became global indeed. That is why all the States without any exception must assume collective responsibility for fighting against it. The successful holding of the Durban review conference in April this year can become a crucial step on the way of fighting racism. We appeal to all States to engage as fully as possible in the preparation and holding of the Conference.

Mr. President,

In many countries there are forces, which use racism as a tool for political struggle, build their political programs and platforms on it. It is particularly alarming that some governments carry out national policies aimed at discriminating national and ethnic minorities, deliberately ignoring the words of the Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all people are born free and equal in their dignity and their rights. How else their activities aimed at securing and fortifying racial and ethnic inequality may be explained, while nazism, segregation and apartheid are still fresh in our memory? At this session of the Council Russia will table a resolution, condemning one of the most detestable instruments of such policy – arbitrary deprivation of nationality.

Mr. President,

The recent developments show that some political forces are trying to erase from human memory the fundamental fact that the very birth of both the UN and the modern international system of promotion and protection of human rights was the result of the great Victory in the World War II – the victory over the nazi ideology, based on the postulate of racial superiority. That is why the Russian Federation resolutely condemns any attempts to desecrate the memory of those, who fought and gave their lives to refute that doctrine, which was given the clear international legal qualification by the Nuremberg tribunal. We are convinced that connivance at attempts to revise history for political reasons, indulgence towards presenting the Nazis and their collaborators as heroes, demolition of monuments to the soldiers of anti-Hitler coalition and other similar flagrant actions will only promote the spreading of ideas and manifestations of racism and xenophobia in the world. It is a blasphemy to justify such actions by reference to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

Mr. President,

We should not forget that the main and fundamental right of any society is the right to choose freely its way of development. However, it is hard to imagine a

harmony in society without respect for individual rights and freedoms. We think that universal human rights standards should be same for all and should be implemented while taking into account civilizational, cultural and historical specificities, moral principles and traditional values of the societies. Imposing unilateral standards under the guise of universal ones, politicized interpretation of human rights and democratic principles are inadmissible. It contradicts the basic postulates of international law and discredits human rights as an institute.

Mr. President,

The Russian Federation firmly believes that the work of the HRC and the whole UN human rights dimension should further contribute to the development of constructive inter-State co-operation in the field of human rights and strengthening international regime of their observance on the basis of justice and equality.

Thank You.