

**Transcript of press encounter with General Assembly President Jan Eliasson**  
1 March 2006, New York

**President Eliasson:** We are in the midst of consultations on the Human Rights Council. I am receiving reactions from Member States. I hope that we will be able to proceed with the draft resolution. I have always said that I want to proceed as soon as possible. I have said earlier that the beginning of the work of the Human Rights Commission is a crucial date – the 13th of March. I hope, of course, that we will be able to move to action. And as President of the General Assembly, I would also hope that we would move to action and have a consensus decision on this very crucial matter.

What is at stake is the establishment of a Human Rights Council within the body of the United Nations. As I stated several times, the draft resolution represents the best attempt, not only of the two Co-Chairs, from South Africa and Panama, but also myself. I think it constitutes the best basis for the continued work of human rights, which has to be maintained in the United Nations. The human rights dimension is the soul of the United Nations, and we have to preserve that very important element of our Organization.

So I would hope that we will all be able to move in this direction, and find that in a situation like this, the national positions have to be put in second place, and we now have to look for international solutions. I think we have moved from the desirable to the workable, with the maintenance of the principles that should guide the human rights work. It is in this spirit that I continue my consultations, and I hope that we will be able to move to a decision as soon as possible.

**Q:** Mr. President, you asked the Secretary-General to delay his report on reform until next Tuesday. Is that related to the Human Rights Council situation?

**President Eliasson:** No.

**Q:** Why did you ask that?

**President Eliasson:** It's a matter related to discussions with the Chairmen of the management and Secretariat reform issues, and also with the Fifth Committee. We are discussing the follow-up steps to be taken, and I hope we will find reasonable formulas for that. But that has nothing to do with the Human Rights Council.

**Q:** Mr. President, March 13th is just a very few days away. If you are not able for some reason to make that March 13th date, would you consider putting off a vote until after the Commission meets in Geneva, which will be the end of April?

**President Eliasson:** I don't want to speculate about reaching that position. But I have stated several times that I can see grave difficulties with renegotiation, and I can see grave difficulties

with changing the text. And therefore I would hope that we would come to closure on this before the Human Rights Commission begins.

**Q:** Sir, how do you assess the impact of a U.S. “no” vote on the Council’s future viability?

**President Eliasson:** I don’t want to speculate about a voting situation. I’m working hard to reach a consensus situation on this very important matter. On human rights, we need to be united in this world.

**Q:** Have you spoken with Ambassador Bolton about this directly and tried to sort of, if not negotiate, but you know, convince him to come on board?

**President Eliasson:** We are in contact.

**Q:** Mr. President, do you have a response from the European Union? What’s their position?

**President Eliasson:** We are also in contact. There is ongoing discussion. That’s why I really want to refrain from coming to definitive statements now. It’s a situation where we need to listen to each other. And I think there is a dynamics created every day. Actually dialogue is also taking place – a very important and healthy one. I don’t want to put too much drama into the situation. We will now, in a cool and sober manner, analyze everyday where we are, and then there are some crucial decisions to be taken -- before the Human Rights Commission starts its work.

**Q:** What points are you considering for negotiation? Is it possibly making the size of the body smaller, or possibly increasing the [inaudible] membership?

**President Eliasson:** I have already indicated that most delegations warned me very, very strongly of changing the text. I never heard the words “Pandora’s box” being so often repeated...

[inaudible]

Thank you very much

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