



NORWAY

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STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Johan L. Løvald
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

New York, 15 March 2006

Mr. President,

Norway welcomes the adoption of this historic resolution.

We join others in expressing our gratitude to you, Mr. President, and your two Co-chairs, Ambassador Kumalo from South Africa and Ambassador Aria from Panama, for your tireless efforts and dedication in bringing our long process of consultations to a successful conclusion.

Our gratitude also goes to the Secretary-General for not only having initiated the reform process, but also for your continued support throughout the process in order to help getting this resolution adopted.

Mr. President,

We regret that this historic resolution could not be adopted without a vote.

Human rights are universal rights. In order for the new Council to be truly effective in the protection and promotion of human rights we need the support and strong engagement of all Member States. This is an obligation we all have to the victims of human rights violations.

While the text is weaker in certain parts than we would have hoped for, we recognize that many other countries could claim the same. The text is a result of a compromise and cannot be an ideal blueprint for anyone. The establishment of the Human Rights Council present, however, is a unique opportunity to start putting in place a reinvigorated system for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world. We are confident that the new Council represent an important step towards strengthening the UN human rights machinery.

The text we have adopted sets standards for new member countries, who will be asked to make explicit commitments to promote and protect human rights. While recognizing that the membership of the Council is open to all Member States, it is our responsibility to elect candidates that are qualified to fulfil the mandate of promoting and protecting human rights. Commitment to respect and ensure those rights and freedoms will remain of utmost importance for Norway when considering candidates for the Council.

Mr. President,

From the very beginning we have supported the elevation of human rights throughout the UN system and the upgrading of the Commission of Human Rights to a standing Human Rights Council. This will reflect at the institutional level the centrality of human rights in the UN system, in line with security and development.

The text we just adopted will establish a Council with a clear mandate to address all human rights situations, a more frequent meeting schedule that allows it to react more effectively to urgent situations, and a new universal review mechanism to ensure that all countries' human rights record are addressed periodically. The text also preserves key strengths of the Commission, including its unique system of special procedures and its practices of NGO participation.

Mr. President,

Our Heads of State and Governments resolved at the Summit 2005 to further strengthen the United Nation machinery. As part of the fulfilment of this commitment we agreed to revitalize the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Now we have taken another important step. We must now show the political will to make the Council an effective human rights body. To this end, we find it essential that outstanding questions about the modalities of the Council and its working methods will be dealt with in an open and inclusive process.

The political will and commitment of the international community will be as important to making the new Council a better tool for meaningful promotion and protection of human rights, as any changes in structure and working methods. The real test will be about implementing human rights standards.

Mr. President,

Before the new Council will be able to deal with substantial issues, the first tasks will inter alia be to adopt a new agenda and working methods. In order to avoid a potential protection gap, we find it crucial that we arrive at smooth transition arrangements from the Human Rights Commission to the new Council.

Thank you, Mr. President.