



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VANU GOPALA MENON,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SINGAPORE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,  
AT THE PLENARY MEETING TO ADOPT DRAFT RESOLUTION  
A/60/L.48 ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL,  
15 MARCH 2006**

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1 Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr President.

2 Voltaire once said, "*Work keeps away those three great evils: boredom, vice, and poverty*". So perhaps we should be grateful that the discussions on the Human Rights Council have taken this long! But, as they say, all good things must come to an end. And many of us here are glad for it.

3 We have been at this for months. The fatigue in this room is palpable. We have had intense discussions. Delegations have fought for their positions, as well they should. We all have responsibilities to champion our national interests. Alas, this also led to sharp disagreements. Sometimes they seemed pointed enough to derail the process.

4 Was it fortitude or obstinacy that made us persevere? It was certainly the deft and patient leadership of the co-Chairs that kept the process on track. I pay tribute to them. They then handed the baton to you, Mr President, for the sprint to the finish. You have worked tirelessly to forge consensus and put together what you call your "best effort". Looking at the text, it is an apt description. It is also testament to the good faith and courage that most delegations have shown in accepting compromise.

5 I do not mean to suggest that the text is poor. It is not. It is balanced and realistic. You have met the critical concerns of developing and developed countries. The text establishes a Human Rights Council that is superior to what we have. Council members will be required to amass a significant threshold of support in a direct and secret election. Term limits will allow all members, especially small states, to have the opportunity to serve. The Council will be more representative. Dialogue and cooperation are stressed, double standards are reduced. In short, this is a Council that will have legitimacy in membership and in its decisions.

6 Will your text make everyone completely happy? Of course not. But this is a good thing. If any delegation got everything it wanted, this would be a capitulation not a negotiation. And capitulations are the anathema to enduring agreements.

7 Let me call for trust. Let us trust in the process that we have devised to ensure fairness and efficacy. Let us trust in the ability of member states to make sound decisions. Let us trust in ourselves that we have the courage to deal with this body constructively and through a prism that is broader than just national interests.

8 I stress this point because we often lose sight of it when we angst over the configuration of the Council. But this Council will not be judged on its structure, it will be judged by its results in promoting and protecting human rights. This is where our role as member states is crucial. How we relate to the Council, how we cooperate, how realistic we are, how fair we are, how committed we are - all these will influence how successful the Council will be. In this regard, it is important that we make utmost efforts to avoid the mistakes of the past, mistakes which discredited the Commission on Human Rights. We should also be prepared to regularly review the work methods and functioning of the Council to make it more effective in the promotion and protection of human rights. The resolution already provides for this. In short, we should ensure that the Council is a living entity, one that is fine-tuned and overhauled occasionally. We should focus our energies on making the Council work, because this is where we will be judged by history.

9 So let us put aside our disagreements and dissatisfactions and move forward. We have all put much effort into this process. We have all a shared commitment to improve human rights. Let us get on with nurturing what we have created and ensuring its success.

10 Thank you.

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