

**Farewell Statement**

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**President of the Human Rights Council**

**Organizational Meeting for the Sixth Cycle**

**Human Rights Council**

**20 June 2011**

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Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If you permit me to say a few words at this stage, I would like to begin by saying that it has been a great privilege to me to have been given the opportunity to serve the Council. Looking back in the past 12 months, it has been an exceptionally busy year. We have had to deal with a rapid succession of important events and situations, many of which are still unfolding. Indeed, for me, personally, it has been a most eventful period throughout, at times challenging but on the whole a most rewarding experience.

Today, it is not my intention to list out all that we have accomplished. I believe they speak for themselves. But rather, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly offer some of my impressions on how things have fared in the work of the Council, over the course of the past 12 months.

What comes to mind, first and foremost, is the strong and active engagement of the Council in advancing promotion and protection of human rights.

In face of crisis situations, the Council has shown that, whenever there is a unity of purpose and the strive for consensus, we have the capacity to act to address these situations in a timely and constructive manner. But still, we need to do more.

Our engagement must be more than just a one shot exercise. We need to ensure that the common resolve that we have expressed are followed up with concrete actions, so as to produce

meaningful impacts on the ground, and make a difference in the lives of peoples in need of protection.

We also need to continue to develop the needed tools for addressing urgent situations that are more finely calibrated to the different circumstances of each situation.

Another positive development that I have witnessed is the stronger and more active engagement within the Council through the intensification of consultation and consensus building, as evident in the increasing number of cross regional initiatives and increasing number of resolutions adopted by consensus.

I have no doubt that the building of bridges and the forging of common grounds and engagement of all stakeholders, including NGOs, will determine, to a significant extent, how successful we are in carrying out the manifold tasks entrusted upon the Council.

One of the main challenges, I believe, is that our efforts must also be tempered by a sense of realism. Human rights are indeed universal values and, as recent events have underscored, they are also universal aspirations. But as a state-driven body, the Council will always have to deal with different perceptions of human rights. The discourse on human rights within the Council cannot avoid the different political, economic, social and cultural context in which they occur. Therefore, recognizing our diversity and having mutual respect for different views and opinions needs to be at the heart of the constructive dialogue and cooperation that we seek to promote within the Council.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, I have also asked myself what we could have done better. With the benefit of the hindsight, I wish that we could have spent more time during the review process concentrating on the main issues, rather than the procedural ones which bogged us down for a considerable amount of time. I wish there could have been more cross regional dialogues early on in the process. While the outcome that we produced might have not been up to our expectations, the exercise of the review itself and the frank and open discussions we had on all the key issues have proven to be a worthwhile undertaking, and I believe have helped us to recognize the need to constantly strive for improvement in the work and functioning of the Council.

Before concluding, permit me to express some of my hopes for the future. I would like to recall the retreat that we had in Bangkok and the 3 main questions that we sought to address, namely - can we do better in terms of making the Council more effective and efficient; can we do better in terms of having real impacts on the ground; and can we do better in dealing with emergency situations in a timely and constructive manner. I believe that these issues remain pertinent and they should remain in the back of our mind as we move forward the agenda of the Council. And I firmly believe that with engagement and resolve on the part of all of us - members, observers, stakeholders - the answer is indeed, yes we can and must do better on all these fronts in order to advance the cause of human rights in our respective countries and worldwide.

Let me conclude on a note of thanks.

- I would like to, first of all, express my debt of gratitude to the members of the Bureau - Ambassador of Norway, Bente; Ambassador of Cuba, Rodolfo; Ambassador of Slovakia, Fedor, and Ambassador of Angola, Arcanjo - for the great teamwork and for their invaluable support and advice throughout.

- I would also like to pay tribute to the facilitators and coordinator of the review process - Ambassador of Brazil, Lele; Ambassador of Romania, Maria; Ambassador of India, Gopi; Ambassador of Morocco, Omar; Ambassador of Finland, Hannu, and Ambassador of Algeria, Idriss - for taking on a tough task and for carrying it out with great dedication.

- I would further like to thank the High Commissioner and her office, particularly the Secretariat led by Eric, for all the work that they have done to facilitate the work and efficient running of the Council.

- My appreciation also goes to the conference service and interpreters whose efforts day in and day out have kept the wheel running smoothly.

- And last but not least my sincere thanks also go to all security officers, who are always the first to arrive and the last to leave this chamber.

- Most importantly, I would like to thank all my colleagues, ambassadors and delegates, as well as all stakeholders for the confidence and trust that you have placed in me and it has been my great privilege and honor to have worked closely with all of you throughout the year.

Thank you.