

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuanketkeow,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand
to the United Nations Office
and other International Organizations in Geneva
upon assuming the Presidency of the Human Rights Council
Geneva, 21 June 2010

Mr. President,

Madame Deputy High Commissioner,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

I would first of all like to thank all my colleagues for this honour given to my country and myself. I would in particular like to express my deep appreciation to the members of the Asian Group for nominating me and to the membership of the Human Rights Council for endorsing my nomination.

And, at the outset, I wish to thank my immediate predecessor, Ambassador Alex van Meeuwen of Belgium, for the dedicated and steadfast manner in which he has presided over the Human Rights Council during the past year. I would like to pay tribute to him as well as to all our distinguished predecessors?Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico, Ambassador Doru Romulus Costea of Romania and Ambassador Martin Uhomobhi of Nigeria?for their outstanding contributions, which have brought us to where we are now and where we can take pride in all that we have accomplished together.

In assuming this post today, I am fully aware of the immense responsibility that lies ahead. During the coming cycle year, we will all have to take on a number of important tasks together. We have the responsibility to advance the work of the Council in the promotion and

protection of human rights. At the same time, we have the important duty of commencing the review process. I do not in any way underestimate the magnitude of the work and challenges before us.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Normally, this occasion has been an opportunity for the incoming President to speak about some of his priorities and the plan he intends to pursue. However, on my part, I would much rather speak less about the priorities on my agenda and concentrate more on how we can endeavour to forge a common agenda.

But I do wish to take this opportunity to assure you that in discharging my responsibilities, I will be guided by a number of key principles: First, the credibility and effectiveness of the Council as a whole. Second, the need to strengthen the spirit of constructive dialogue and a common approach to the promotion and protection of human rights.

I will also be guided by the principle of reaching out, hearing out and respecting the views of all. That is why I hope to begin immediately informal consultations on the way forward, and to prepare the ground work early on.

We are all very much aware that great expectations have been placed on the Council as a whole, as we are about to complete our fifth year. There is certainly a shared responsibility among all of us to help move the Council forward. But ultimately, the success and credibility of the Council will be judged, not by the eloquence of our statements in this Hall, nor by the number of resolutions that we pass, but rather by how much we can make a real impact on the ground.

And ultimately, we have an overriding obligation to serve our constituency?the people who are in dire need of human rights protection; the people who are subject to human rights abuses on a daily basis.

As we undertake this important review process, it is imperative that we seek to build upon our successes, which are indeed many. At the same time, however, we must not shy away from tackling whatever key issues that need to be addressed, and which might have an important bearing on the work of the Council. There will be the need for some degree of creativity in utilizing the tools at our disposal so as to enhance our capacity to react to human rights issues and situations.

The membership of the Human Rights Council reflects the rich diversity among our countries and regions. We, therefore, need to draw synergy from such diversity, recognizing that human rights are indeed universal, indivisible and interdependent, and recognizing, most of all, that we all share a common stake in the credibility and effectiveness of the Council as a whole.

Our challenge here is not just in reaching out to all stakeholders but in forging real and meaningful partnerships between all members, observers, civil society and, particularly, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), whose role is central to our common cause of promoting and protecting human rights for all.

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

In discharging my responsibilities, I pledge to you that I will do my best and to the utmost of my abilities, working with the Bureau, all my distinguished Vice Presidents, to ensure the smooth conduct of our proceedings, but also forging consensus where needed and reaching out to all stakeholders.

As we embark along this path, and as I assume the Presidency of the Human Rights Council, I hope to draw upon your cooperation, support and collective wisdom, which shall be so important to me in discharging the important duties in which you have entrusted me.

Thank you.