

Statement
by
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Madam Deputy High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by extending my warmest congratulations to the President of the Council, Ambassador Baudelaire Ndong Ella of Gabon. Having at one time sat where he is sitting now, I know how demanding the task can be. Rest assured that you have Thailand's fullest support.

Also, I wish to pay special tribute to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Pillay, for her tireless efforts and dedication to the cause of human rights throughout her distinguished tenure.

Mr. President,

High hopes and expectations have been placed on the Council since its inception in 2006. At each session of the Council, we discuss many important and weighty issues, which affect the lives and fate of millions around the world.

In discharging the Council's responsibility, the question that we must constantly ask ourselves is whether we have made a real difference to the lives of the people who are subject to all sorts of human rights abuses and are in dire need of protection.

Human rights represent the challenge of our time. Since the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, we have made progress in terms of human rights norms and institution building.

The Council itself, compared to its predecessor – the Commission on Human Rights, has come a long way in advancing human rights around the world.

And yet, in spite of all these developments and advancements, millions are still deprived of their basic rights. Intolerance, prejudices, inequality and injustices still remain as root causes that have given rise to many situations of concern that are unfolding before us.

At the same time, the internet revolution and social media have led to political awakening in many societies where peoples are now demanding more freedom, more democracy and more respect for human rights.

Mr. President,

A culture of respect for human rights cannot be promoted in isolation. It can take root and thrive in an environment where democratic values and respect for fundamental freedoms prevail.

But the advance of democracy brings with it a set of challenges and pressures for greater accountability and participation by those whose voices have not been heard nor heeded.

Democracy is a process that requires constant nurturing and empowering of the people. And human rights must be fully promoted and protected.

Like many countries, my country Thailand faces these challenges as our democracy evolves and hopefully will be more strengthened.

That is why the Thai people are determined to stay the course of democracy and resolve whatever differences that exist through the democratic process.

Mr. President,

While the Council can be proud of its successes, we know that we can and must do better.

Thailand is proud to have served as a member of the Council. And we will be proud to serve once again, if elected.

And because we attach such great importance to the Council, may I take this opportunity to address what I see as five challenges for the Council, as reflected by a range of issues we will be taking up at the 25th Session.

First, we need to foster a culture of constructive dialogue.

Human rights are supposed to be universal and indeed they are. But the reality is that perceptions differ due to our diversity. And inevitably, there will always be the politics of human rights.

Nevertheless, it is important that we treat each other with respect, and respect different views and opinions.

And we should always strive to build bridges, find common grounds and foster the spirit of consensus which is so essential to the effectiveness and credibility of the Council.

Second, we need to invest in the future through better prevention.

The key is to develop an effective early warning capacity.

The Council cannot do this alone. It should work in partnership with the OHCHR, treaty bodies, special procedures, civil society, including regional organizations and regional human rights mechanisms.

To address root causes of the pressing situations we face, the whole UN system is required to work as one.

For the Council, it can give greater weight to promoting human rights education, human rights training, capacity building for local stakeholders and advocating inter-faith dialogue among communities, among others.

That is why Thailand initiated the annual resolution to promote technical cooperation and capacity building in the work of the Council. And we will keep working on greater provision of technical cooperation as an important part of prevention.

Indeed, we welcome the High-level dialogue on the promotion of preventive approaches within the UN system held two days ago, which emphasized the need to ensure better coordination and avoid overlapping of responsibilities among the various UN agencies.

The initiative of the UN Secretary-General – Rights up Front – that places prevention at the core of the UN system deserves the full support of this Council.

Third, we need to respond better to emergency situations.

Ultimately, much of the credibility and relevance of the Council will depend on how its members deal with urgent situations which we still witness in many parts of the world, such as Syria and the Central African Republic on which the Council just held a special session.

The unity of the Council is very important. We have to send a firm and united message when confronted with gross and systematic violations of human rights.

But we must always keep the door opened for dialogue and engagement with the countries concerned before, during and even after the crisis.

Root causes and circumstances that have given rise to each urgent situation tend to be different.

So, the Council will need to develop more tools to deal with them in a way that is timely and carefully calibrated to be commensurate with the gravity and urgency of each situation, and importantly, in a way that corresponds to the extent of cooperation or non-cooperation on the part of the country concerned.

The bottom line is that we must engage with the countries concerned as early as possible.

Also, the Council will need to constantly adjust its engagement as the situations evolve and unfold. Such is the case of Myanmar where we see real and genuine process of reform gaining momentum.

Fourth, we have to work together in making the Universal Periodic Review – the so-called crown jewel of the Council – more effective.

We are now entering the second cycle of the review. The success of this process will depend in large part on how recommendations accepted during the first cycle are implemented at the

national level.

While we should encourage better implementation, we all know that we should also improve the quality of recommendations. And we should be realistic that many countries, despite the best of intention, do not have the capacity to implement sometimes over a hundred recommendations. Capacity building must therefore be part and parcel of the UPR process.

The voluntary mid-term update is also important. It should not be about giving score cards. Rather, it should provide impetus for better implementation by helping to identify areas where countries have constraints and need assistance and capacity building.

Last but not least, we should consider how human rights should be reflected in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Human rights- based approach should be an underlying principle for an inclusive and sustainable development.

While we should recognize that there still exist different views on how human rights can fit into the Post-2015 Development Agenda, but it does not mean that we should not discuss this issue here in this chamber,

The Council should take up this matter and provide thinking and inputs to the process underway in New York. We should see how the effort of the Council can be synergized with what is going on in the ECOSOC and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as suggested by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his speech to the Council.

Mr. President,

The success of the Council depends on each and every one of us. Each one of us will need to contribute to promoting human rights at home and together we need to do our utmost to forge the spirit of consensus and unity, and strive towards concerted actions to advance human rights around the world.

But the mission that the Council has been entrusted with has no boundaries. Ultimately, our success will be determined by the degree to which we serve our constituencies – the people who are subject to violations and in dire need of protection.

In closing, I wish to underscore the pledge and commitment that Thailand has made to work with the Council – members, observers and all stakeholders – so that we can make a real difference to the lives of the peoples on the ground and justify the high hopes and expectations that they have placed on this Council.

I thank you, Mr. President.
