



SLOVAKIA

**4th Session of the Human Rights Council
High-Level Segment**

Address by

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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC TO THE
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Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address the High Level Segment of the Human Rights Council on behalf of the Slovak Republic. At the outset I would like to underline that Slovakia fully associates with the statement made by Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, speaking on behalf of the European Union on Monday.

In June last year, we all gathered here to welcome the establishment of a new body within the UN system - the Human Rights Council. We reaffirmed our unanimous support to the Council which shall be responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

At its very first session, the Council made a promising start by agreeing on a draft of the International Convention for the Protection of All persons from Enforced Disappearances, adopted subsequently by the General Assembly, as well as a draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. The review process related to the institution building was successfully launched by creating respective working groups.

Over the following eight months, however, the Council has not always lived up to its demanding mandate. In spite of the Council's permanent nature and the relatively high frequency of its regular and special sessions, it became evident that Member States do not always share the same principles when there is a need for common action in the human rights field. But it is up to the Council to reverse this initial trend and to prove to become a fair, credible and effective organ in the field of promotion and protection of human rights all around the world. The special session on Darfur in December last year, resulting in the consensual adoption of its decision, was a step into the right direction.

We are convinced that the Council must be able to respond promptly and effectively to all kinds of human rights violations as they occur and should look into proper ways how to address them. In accordance with the principles enshrined in its founding resolution, the Council is supposed to work in a results-oriented manner and adopted decisions should be subject of subsequent follow-up discussions and implementation. The proclaimed principles

of cooperation and dialogue should thus not become an empty phrase but rather a means of providing for widely accepted solutions to existing problems.

Mr. President,

We deeply regret that the High-Level mission to assess the human rights situation in Darfur was prevented to enter the Darfur region to evaluate the situation on the spot. We would like to recall in this regard that the Mission was established by consensus by the Human Rights Council last December. The gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Darfur remain to be a matter of grave concern for the international community. We welcome the report of the High-Level Mission and we are ready to engage in substantive discussion during the following days on the recommendations made by the High-Level Mission. There is a need for an appropriate follow-up to the High-Level Mission's work. We would also like to reiterate our full support to the International Criminal Court which has recently issued its first summons, as a result of its investigation mandated by the Security Council resolution 1593.

The future credibility and effectiveness of the Council very much depends on the institution building process which is due to be accomplished by the end of June. We attach a great importance to this process; since the basic pillars of the Council for the future are now being created. That is why we hope to achieve substantial and meaningful results by June, hopefully by consensus. The new mechanisms should preserve and improve the strengths of the former Commission and eliminate its weaknesses. In particular, we would like to underline the great value of the system of special procedures. The establishment of a credible and effective universal periodic review system, the new feature in the UN human rights toolbox, is of paramount importance.

We would also like to voice our support to numerous human rights defenders all over the world who risk their lives in pursuing noble principles of promotion and protection of human rights as enshrined in Article 1 of the UN Charter.

Mr. President,

I would like to stress the great importance that my Government attaches to the issue of abolition of the death penalty. Slovakia was among 85 signatories of the Statement on Abolition of the Death Penalty delivered during the UN General Assembly in December 2006. The issue of capital punishment deserves its utmost consideration by the wide UN membership.

Slovakia is fully aware of the need to further improve the rights of persons belonging to the most vulnerable groups. We welcome the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which is to be opened for signature at the end of this month. We have been following closely the promotion and protection of the rights of the most innocent human beings, the children. Slovakia has become a State Party to all the instruments protecting the rights of the child, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which Slovakia ratified last year. In this regard, we have subscribed to the Paris commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups, as adopted just recently in February this year. My country also welcomes the elaboration of the World Report on Violence against Children, which was launched here in Geneva in November 2006. In our opinion, a follow-up on this comprehensive study as well as appropriate funds to the whole process should be secured.

Slovakia actively implements all the relevant United Nations documents in the area of gender equality. We sharply denounce any kind of violence committed against women and we call for the adoption of adequate measures in order to implement the respective UN General Assembly consensus resolution.

Mr. President,

As a current non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Slovakia has clearly demonstrated its capacity to take a share of responsibility for global issues. All the efforts that we undertake within the UN Security Council are guided by our ambition to make a real contribution to the maintenance of peace and security, the principles of rules of law and respect for human rights worldwide, in accordance with the basic principles of the UN

Charter. During our Presidency of the Security Council last month, we aspired to highlight the importance of security sector reforms as one of the crucial prerequisites for stability and development in general and for countries in transition in particular.

Based on the experience acquired and emanating from our determination to take up relevant challenges in the field of human rights, Slovakia has recently submitted its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2008-2011 at the elections to be held during the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2008. If our bid for the Council membership turns out to be successful, we would like to promote within the Council the principles of democracy, unconditional respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and good governance, in accordance with the main goals of the Slovak domestic and foreign policy. Such guiding principles will also be reflected in our list of pledges and commitments that we will submit in due time.

Mr. President,

By concluding, I would like to reiterate the desire of my country to contribute to the ongoing consolidation and strengthening of the Council so that it will be able to make a real difference in enhancing the overall human rights standards. In this sense, let me wish you every success in your deliberations and the ensuing work of the 4th session of the Human Rights Council.

Thank you for your attention.