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**PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA**  
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STATEMENT BY

**H.E. MR. ANAND SHARMA,**  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

AT THE

**HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE  
SEVENTH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**GENEVA**  
March 3, 2008

- Mr. President,
- High Commissioner for Human Rights,
- Excellencies,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege and honour for me to once again address this august body, the main UN human rights forum. On behalf of the Government of India, I would like to reiterate our firm commitment to work towards making the Human Rights Council a strong, effective and efficient body capable of promoting and protecting all human rights for all.

2. Mr. President, the establishment of the Human Rights Council in 2006 had evoked mixed reactions; of high expectations along with a degree of scepticism. We note with satisfaction that in its initial years of work, the Council has been able to meet these high expectations, to use the eloquent words of our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (spoken in a different context), “not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially”. The consensual adoption of the institution-building package last year constituted a perfect launch for the Council and augurs well for its future. We pay tribute to the collective efforts of all those involved.

3. Mr. President, while we have had a successful beginning, it is imperative for us to build upon this initial success and not lose momentum. The immediate challenge is to successfully operationalize the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism. This mechanism has been designed to enable the Council to review country situations in a positive manner and we attach great importance to it. We are happy that India would be among the first countries to be reviewed under this mechanism. True to the spirit of this mechanism, our national report has been prepared through a process of wide consultations with all stakeholders.

Mr. President,

4. In its pursuit of realization of all human rights for all, the Human Rights Council must take into account the inter-linkage and mutually reinforcing nature of human rights, development and peace and security. These together have been recognized by world leaders as constituting the three pillars of the United Nations system. This is of particular relevance for Asia and Africa, where the after effects of colonialism continue to manifest even as efforts continue to combat acute poverty and lack of development. The Human Rights Council needs to reinvigorate the efforts of the international community for transforming into reality their commitment to the Right to Development, the progress towards which, thus far, has been tardy. The Council also needs to play a central role in combating terrorism which has emerged as the biggest challenge to peace and security in our times. The Human Rights Council must recognize, in most unequivocal terms, that terrorism is a direct violation of human rights, in particular the most basic rights, the right to life and liberty.

launched several new, ambitious initiatives in the areas of health, education, and employment. Further, in order to ensure that benefits of these schemes reach the people, a major step for empowerment of people has been taken through the enactment of the Right to Information Act, which is a very potent tool available to the people to ensure accountability of the Government.

9. Mr. President, may I draw the attention of the Human Rights Council to the continuing violence in Occupied Palestine, which is a matter of grave concern. Recent events, including the disproportionate use of retaliatory force by Israel, have led to avoidable civilian casualties, including the death of innocent children. This is unacceptable. We strongly urge an immediate end to the cycle of violence by all parties concerned so that the focus is not lost on the process of dialogue-driven conflict resolution.

10. Mr. President, this year we commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. This follows another milestone event last year when we commemorated the centenary of the Satyagraha Movement launched by our great leader Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. In commemoration of this event, the General Assembly decided to annually observe the International Day of Non-Violence on October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. We note the strong resonance in the messages contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ideas and values espoused by Gandhiji. The essence of Gandhiji's political philosophy was the empowerment of every individual and protecting the dignity and self-respect of every human being which is also the central message of the Universal Declaration. It is the pursuit of this noble objective that should guide the work of the Human Rights Council.

Thank you.