

THE REPUBLIC OF

KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION
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Statement

by

H.E. Mr. In-kook Park

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and Global Issues

at

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Geneva

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Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking Ambassador Doru Costea, President of the Human Rights Council, for his outstanding leadership. Under his effective and resolute stewardship, I have every confidence that we will surge forward in our noble efforts.

It gives me great honor to deliver a statement on this meaningful session of the Human Rights Council. In the momentous year that marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the steps taken forward by the Council hold even greater meaning. We all recognize the achievements in human rights norms and standards setting inspired by the Universal Declaration. Now it is high time to renew our efforts to realize them. It is our shared responsibility to make the Human Rights Council an efficient, responsive and fair body.

I would like to express my appreciation to all participants for their devotion and contribution to putting in place the architecture and procedures of the Council for its full functioning. In this sense, I share the view that the Council should embrace a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, a results-focused approach and high standards of the Council members.

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Council is now on the verge of bringing into operation a new creative instrument in the field of human rights: the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR, much hoped for and widely supported by the international community, is expected to serve as a valuable tool in overcoming the chronic criticism about the inter-governmental discussion on human rights: those of politicization, selectivity and double standards.

In his message to the Council last year, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also emphasized that "the mechanism has great potential to promote and protect human rights in the darkest corners of the world." The Council's review, starting from April this year, will provide an unprecedented opportunity for the examination of the records and performances of all human rights of all countries on an equal basis.

It is difficult to say how effective the UPR will be without seeing it in practice. Much will depend on our actual operation of the whole review process. Genuine dialogue, cooperation and a sense of responsibility through the process will be indispensable for the success of the UPR.

I would like to emphasize that the UPR should be a forum of fairness, transparency and inclusiveness that ensure reliable outcomes and follow-up. It is our common obligation to invest our best efforts to this end. The Republic of Korea, as a State scheduled to be reviewed in May, will launch a wide range of consultations among relevant ministries, the National Human Rights

Commission and NGOs. This domestic process itself will provide a valuable opportunity to review the overall situation of human rights and identify areas to be improved before the UPR Session.

Mr. President,

Special procedures should remain a chariot of the Human Rights Council together with the UPR; we must nurture the two mechanisms to be complementary rather than exclusive. Since the start of the review, rationalization and improvement (RRI) process in June last year, many mandates of special procedures have been reviewed. In the process of RRI, we must consider first the victims and the situation on the ground. To this end, country-specific mandate-holders are required to continuously serve as the "eyes and ears" unless there is clear evidence of improvement in the field of human rights.

The Code of Conduct for Special Procedures mandate-holders should aim at enhancing the effectiveness of the system of special procedures. It should not be used or misused to intrude upon the work of mandate-holders. Special emphasis should also be placed on ensuring the full collaboration of governments with the respective procedures.

With regard to thematic mandates, a standing invitation to all mandate-holders is a clear evidence of a government's willingness to cooperate with and contribute to the strengthening of the special procedures system. Fifty-seven Member States have offered standing invitations to thematic special procedures mandate-holders. With the expectation of an overwhelming participation of the international community, the Republic of Korea would like to extend a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures mandate-holders.

Mr. President,

The fact that the Council should serve as a forum for cooperation and dialogue should not impede the ability of the Council to effectively engage in states that persistently violate human rights. The Council should be equipped with appropriate mechanisms to effectively respond to persistent and gross violations of human rights. Country-specific resolutions are the mechanism designed to best serve this function, by urging the UN system and the country concerned to take appropriate actions.

We share the view that the Council should seek to find ways to encourage cooperation by providing technical assistance and capacity building to help governments willing to improve their human rights records. At the same time, the Council should introduce realistic means to engage governments less willing or not positively responding to the concerns of the international community, to improve their human rights situations. I hope the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee will serve as a think tank to help the Council find appropriate ways to overcome such challenges.

Mr. President,

I would like to invite your attention to a dire reality on which the international community cannot afford to be silent. The overall human rights situation in Darfur, especially for women and children, continues to be a source of serious concern. Impunity, above all, is a priority to be urgently addressed.

The international community should also continue to pay attention to the human rights situation in Myanmar. While welcoming the political process declared by the Myanmar Government, we hope the constitutional referendum will be inclusive, transparent and conducted in an atmosphere of freedom and respect for human rights.

The Government of the Republic of Korea, underscoring human rights as a universal value, calls upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to take appropriate measures to address the international community's concern that the human rights situation in the DPRK has not improved.

Ongoing conflicts and unmitigated violence in other regions also require our continued and unified engagement. My Government greatly values the work of the special sessions of the Council convened to tackle human rights situations in the regions.

Mr. President,

In 2007, the Government of the Republic of Korea adopted the National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (NAP). Since then, relevant ministries have made visible improvements in various fields of human rights including gender equality and the rights of women of international marriages and their children. The NAP reaffirms government responsibilities and policies for the protection and promotion of human rights including those of the minorities and socially vulnerable. The comprehensive voluntary goal is to be implemented during the period 2007-2011. In this regard, we are ready to share our experiences on the NAP mechanism with other member states in the future.

Mr. President,

The high expectations that we place in the Council, and our commitment to genuine dialogue and cooperation, I believe, will indeed lead to the building of an effective body for the promotion and protection of human rights. My Government takes this opportunity to reaffirm its strong commitment to working with openness and dialogue to ensure that the Council meets the high expectations of all. I sense a dedication to the success of the Council among all Member States. Indeed, with shared responsibility, I trust that we can together turn it into a resounding success for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Thank you.