

**A/S Brimmer U.S. Intervention at HRC 22
Tuesday 26 February 2013, 10 minutes**

Mr. President, fellow delegates, distinguished guests,

It is an honor for me to once again represent the United States before the UN Human Rights Council, to present our first intervention since being elected to a second term. In September 2009, I delivered the first U.S. intervention as a member of this esteemed body, in which the United States pledged to pursue broad international cooperation, both with traditional partners and across longstanding divides, to advance universal human rights and strengthen the Human Rights Council's ability to achieve its essential mandate. I set out four aspirations that this Council must work to attain: universality, dialogue, principle, and truth. And in the three and a half years since the United States first joined the Human Rights Council, we have seen much progress toward these aspirations, and have reached a number of impressive achievements, principally through broad cooperation and collaboration by this Council's diverse membership.

First among these achievements has been the Human Rights Council's heightened willingness and capacity to address heinous human rights violations. Over the past three years, the Council has taken concrete measures, often in real-time, that shine the spotlight on abuses, and muster international political will toward ending them. It is not a coincidence that violence can imperil human rights, and the Human Rights Council has not shied away from acting amidst ongoing instability and violence. Faced with crises in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire, the Council quickly established new mechanisms for documenting human rights abuses and violations, which have built a strong foundation for future accountability processes and helped maintain international pressure on human rights violators. This Council spoke the truth about human rights violations and abuses in some of the world's most difficult crises, and we must continue to do so.

Another remarkable advance was Resolution 16/18, through which the Council – after years of chronic division – came together to combat religious intolerance, including discrimination and violence. We applaud the leadership that Turkey, Pakistan, and other countries have shown on this resolution, and appreciate as well the support of the OIC Secretary-General. The international consensus on this issue offers a practical and effective means to fight intolerance, while avoiding the false choice of restricting the complementary and mutually-dependent freedoms of religion and expression. In today's networked world, hateful, insulting, and intolerant speech can be marginalized and defeated only by encouraging positive and respectful expression. Countless examples have taught us that attempting to outlaw free expression is as dangerous as it is ineffective. That is why Resolution 16/18's catalogue of positive tools to fight intolerance – including education, nondiscrimination laws, and protecting places of worship – is so important, and why we must all continue our joint efforts to translate this consensus into concrete implementation of those policies. This pursuit of honest, open dialogue among member states was one of the themes I pledged the United States would pursue during our first term on the Council, and we will continue to do so during the coming three years.

The Council also has demonstrated its commitment to another benchmark I underscored in 2009, namely the universality of human rights obligations. In establishing the first ever special rapporteur on freedom of peaceable assembly and freedom of association, the Council took an

important step towards helping to protect and realize these crucial rights. The Council's creation of a working group on discriminatory impediments to women's human rights demonstrated our commitment to combat continuing gender bias in all its forms. By formally recognizing that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender men and women enjoy the same human rights as everyone else, the Council helped advance true universality of human rights worldwide. And completion of the first round of Universal Periodic Reviews, in which the human rights record of every single UN member state was subject to scrutiny before the Human Rights Council, has demonstrated that no country is exempt from the universality of its human rights obligations.

But as I speak here today for the first time since the United States was elected to a second term on the Human Rights Council, I must say that for all these achievements, the work of the Council remains unfinished, so long as any of us cannot exercise those fundamental rights that we all share by virtue of our common humanity. It is toward those unfinished tasks that we must devote ourselves in this twenty-second session, and beyond.

The Council's work remains unfinished so long as the Assad regime continues its outrageous attacks on innocent civilians, and disregards its international human rights obligations. The Human Rights Council acted quickly and courageously as one of the earliest voices to condemn these heinous depredations, and through multiple regular and special sessions has continued to call for an end to the violence. Given the essential role the independent commission of inquiry has played, the United States will strongly support at this session the extension of the commission's mandate for another year.

The Council's work remains unfinished so long as millions of North Koreans face untold human rights abuses amidst a daily struggle for survival. Principle demands that the countless human rights violations exacted by the Pyongyang government merit international condemnation and accountability. That is why the United States will support the call by High Commissioner Pillay and Special Rapporteur Marzuki for a mechanism of inquiry to document the DPRK's wanton human rights violations.

The Council's work remains unfinished so long as Sri Lanka continues to fall short in implementing even the recommendations of its own Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission, or in addressing the underlying sources of its longstanding ethnic conflict. Last year's HRC resolution encouraged brave civil society groups on the ground to continue their efforts, and the United States will introduce another resolution at this session to ensure that the international community continues to monitor progress, and to again offer assistance on outstanding reconciliation and accountability issues. The United States hopes this resolution will be a cooperative effort with the Sri Lankan government.

And the Council's work remains unfinished so long as it continues to unfairly single out Israel, the only country with a stand-alone agenda item. Until this Council ceases to subject Israel to an unfair and unacceptable bias, its unprincipled and unjust approach will continue to tarnish the reputation of this body, while doing nothing to support progress toward the peace among Israelis and Palestinians that we all desire so deeply.

Mr. President, fellow delegates, distinguished guests,

Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said that though “we may have all come on different ships, we’re in the same boat now.” The diversity of national delegations seated in this chamber today, working together to forge solutions to so many of humanity’s most inhuman acts, is itself a testament to the power and progress that comes from the cooperation at the root of the United Nations and of the Human Rights Council.

If we are to live up to the lofty ambition that the Human Rights Council by its nature represents, all our nations – working together, despite our different histories – must harness that same potential for progress, that same drive to ensure for all the universal human rights that are their birthrights. That is the standard by which we all must be judged, not just in this twenty-second Council session, but in future sessions and in the years to come.