



BANGLADESH

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Statement by

H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations
at the General Debate of the Third Committee of the 62nd Session of the UNGA

on

'Report of the Human Rights Council'
[agenda item 65].

New York, 05 November 2007

Mr. Chairman, we welcome the opportunity to share our views on the report of the Human Rights Council, particularly on the report of its fifth Session that contains an elaborate framework of human rights mechanisms. The fifth Session of the Council was indeed the culmination of a year-long work on institution building.

We would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for his statement.

Mr. Chairman, the establishment of the Human Rights Council has offered us renewed hope that the body will play an effective role in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. With this high expectation, the General Assembly gave it one year to rebuild its institutional mechanisms. It is reassuring to note that most of its works related to institution building have been completed within the stipulated time. A series of reforms of the new UN institution have been adopted in the text entitled "UN Human Rights Council: Institution-Building".

The text lays out the basic structure for the Council's institutional machinery such as, the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism, the Special Procedures, the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee and the Complaint Procedure. It also sets out an agenda and lays down the Rules of Procedure for the Council.

By adopting the text, member states of the Council have fulfilled their principal responsibility. But the process to reach this stage was not easy. Thanks to the prudence and pragmatism, cooperation and understanding of the delegates that helped the Council overcome many hurdles and adopt the package at the penultimate hour.

There is much to believe that new mechanisms and institutions would offer improvements in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights. We would support the text and call for its adoption by the General Assembly as recommended by the Human Rights Council. We hope the adoption would usher in a new era for the human rights body and a new culture in dealing with human rights.

The proposed Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is an innovative concept in the area of human rights. We have high hopes that the UPR will make the difference between the Human Rights Council and its predecessor body as it is designed to evaluate human rights situation of all countries and suggest remedial measures with a possibility of capacity building assistance. This is likely to create an environment of mutual trust, confidence and understanding. This we believe would also go a long way in upholding the principles of non-selectivity, universality and impartiality. We expect the UPR to develop into a meaningful mechanism so that we can do away with controversial country specific mechanisms eventually.

My delegation concurs that the system of Special Procedures is important to ensure effective promotion and protection of human rights. We are pleased to see some improvements proposed in the system. To our mind, the most significant accomplishment has been the streamlining of the appointment procedure of mandate holders. The role of the Council as the supreme body on human rights has been very rightly reinforced. With the adoption of the code of conduct for the special procedure, we firmly believe that the special procedure is on the right track to garner greater credibility and legitimacy.

Mr. Chairman, we are disappointed to note that in one of the important areas of institutional reform--the review and rationalization of mandates, there has not been much progress as expected. The Council has failed to meet the deadline, till the end of June 2007 to complete the task. The sooner we can complete the task, better it would be for the human rights system in general, and the Council in particular. We would like to stress that any piecemeal approach to conduct the review would be contrary to the spirit of reform and therefore, would be counterproductive. The Council must look at the holistic aspect of the special procedure so that it can undertake a genuine review and find possible protection gaps and where necessary, avoid overlaps in the system.

The agenda and the rules of procedure, which have been agreed upon, meet our expectation. The Council should conform to the framework for the sake of predictability and transparency of its work and be governed by the principles of non-selectivity and universality in application of human rights standards.

Mr. Chairman, Bangladesh delegation reiterates its support for the works of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are convinced that the High Commissioner and her office are making a significant contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights. We welcome the holding of interactive dialogues between the Council members and the High Commissioner for Human Rights during the Council Sessions. Such dialogue no doubt strengthens the relationship of the Human Rights Council with the Office of the High Commissioner and brings synergy in the works of the Human Rights Council thus enhancing cooperation and coordination in their works.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.