



**Permanent Mission
of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Geneva**

**Resumed Sixth Session
of the Human Rights Council**

**Item 3
Report of the fourth session
of the Working Group on an optional protocol
to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights**

**Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Sameh Shoukry
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt
on behalf of the African Group**

Geneva, 10 December, 2007

Please check against delivery

Thank you Mr. President,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the African Group.

Allow me at the outset to thank Mrs. Catarina de Albuquerque for her report on the fourth session of the Open-Ended Working Group on an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We commend the manner in which Ms. De Albuquerque has been steering the work of the Working Group since its first session held in 2004.

The fruitful deliberations of the Fourth Session, based on the first draft optional protocol prepared by the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group, as well as the consultations held prior to the session, contributed significantly to achieving progress towards the elaboration of the Protocol.

The African Group has lent its support for this process since its inception. This is largely due to our firm belief that the initiative to elaborate an optional protocol to the ICESCR can only contribute to strengthening human rights protection in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, and in achieving the principles of equality, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights, while bearing in mind the provisions and the nature of obligations specific to each of the principal international human rights conventions.

Through its regional mechanisms established as per the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, Africa has been at the forefront of international efforts aimed at creating the necessary structures for enhancing human rights protection, including in the field of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The African Group is certainly inspired by its regional experience in this regard.

Mr. President,

The African Group noted during the Fourth Session of the Working Group that the draft optional protocol provided a considerable degree of flexibility in terms of its scope of application, namely, the rights and obligations that fall within the competence of the new complaints mechanism. We reiterate our position that such an approach must not undermine the effectiveness of the Protocol, as an instrument the purpose of which is to enhance the realization and the protection of all economic, social and cultural rights.

In addition, it is vital that the parameters and methodology for the examination of all communications under the proposed Protocol be consistent with the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the nature of States' obligations thereunder.

International cooperation and assistance must be enacted and given full effect in the new Protocol. The proposed assistance fund should conform with the provision of article 2 (1) of the Covenant. The Protocol should also promote and help achieve complementarity in the work of the new UN mechanism and similar regional mechanisms. Last but not least, the Protocol must avoid setting unjustified precedents in the work of UN human rights mechanisms, or address issues extraneous to its subject matter.

Mr. President,

The African Group looks forward to achieving further progress in the negotiations on the Optional Protocol at the next session of the Working. We support the measures aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the deliberations of the Working Group, namely holding shorter, more focused successive sessions.

The African regional consultation meeting on the Optional Protocol, due to be held in Cairo on 9 and 10 January 2008, with the participation of the Chairperson of the Working Group, Government delegations, relevant experts and stakeholders, will provide the African Group the opportunity to further develop and fine-tune its common position on the Protocol, in furtherance of its earlier contributions to the process.

The African Group will work to achieve a consensual outcome to the negotiations, one that is anchored in the relevant international legal framework.

I Thank you.
