

U.S. Statement in Response to HC Arbour Report

Thank you Mr. President, *Michelle Arbour*

We thank High Commissioner Arbour for her report. *The United States*

emphasize the importance of maintaining the independent activities of her office. We are pleased that the West Africa Regional Office will soon be opened and hope that the regional office can assist West African governments in meeting their human rights goals.

We welcome the High Commissioner's comments on the grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law occurring in Sudan. This Council has the opportunity during this session to speak directly to the issues in Sudan. The U.S. hopes the Council will renew the mandate of the

Special Rapporteur on Sudan and continue the work of the independent experts.

The United States shares the High Commissioner's increasing concern about growing violence in Sri Lanka on all sides. We support the Government of Sri Lanka as it grapples with a terrorist group. We have, however, expressed our concerns about human rights violations and the lack of justice and accountability to the Government of Sri Lanka, emphasizing our deep concern about the rise in forced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killings. We have encouraged the Government to conduct proper investigations and where appropriate to arrest and prosecute those responsible for human rights abuses against civilians. We encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to reconsider its rejection of an expanded mandate and staff

for the Office of the High Commissioner in Colombo as we believe such an office would best be able to assist the government in addressing these issues.

Like the High Commissioner the United States welcomed the release of many of those detained in Pakistan after the imposition of the State of Emergency. As we have repeatedly stated, we support a rapid return to a democratic process, including the lifting of the State of Emergency and the conduct in the near future of free, fair, inclusive and transparent elections. The United States has been clear that the state of emergency should be lifted so that citizens and parties have the chance to prepare for the upcoming election and media can report freely.

Lastly, we appreciate the High Commissioner's observation that use of the death penalty should be in conformity with international law. We do not share the view, however, that there is a "broad cross-regional agreement" on eliminating the death penalty. Rather, the recent debate and action on this subject has been characterized by extraordinary acrimony and division. We hope any future debate on this issue will avoid such divisiveness and focus on the need for countries to adhere to international legal standards.

T. J. B. 800, Mr. B. A. S.