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**Nikki Haley Speech – 35th Session of the Human Rights Council, First Meeting**

AMBASSADOR NIKKI HALEY: Good afternoon, President Maza. Thank you for allowing me to address this session.

Before we get started, we would like to give certainly our condolences to our brothers and sisters in London for the tragedies they’ve experienced over the last month. The United States stands strong and firm with our friends in the fight against these cowardly acts that continue to happen.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in front of this body on an issue that we believe is very important, respect for human rights. As you know, the United States is looking carefully at this Council and our participation in it. We see some areas for significant strengthening, and later today I will be speaking at the Geneva Graduate Institute and proposing ideas to make the Human Rights Council more effective, more accountable, and more responsive.

This morning though, I want to underscore our strong conviction to the protection and promotion of human rights. Additionally, I want to highlight that respect for human rights is deeply intertwined with peace and security, and that human rights violations and abuses often serve as triggers for instability and conflict. While this body is dedicated to human rights, all UN bodies, including the UN Security Council, should be working to address human rights violations and abuses as part of its work.

In this session of the Council, it is crucial to adopt the strongest possible resolutions on the critical human rights situations in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Belarus, and Ukraine, and that it follow up to prevent further human rights violations and abuses in those countries.

Human Rights Council resolutions can give hope to people who are fighting for justice, democracy, and human rights. And they can pave the way for accountability. I urge all members to support the participation of civil society in the Human Rights Council without reprisals. The United States will continue to speak up loudly in support of civil society participation.

Civil society has also helped advance the equal rights of women, an important theme of this session. Based on my own experience, I know that when women can exercise their voices at the highest ranks in business and in government, we all benefit and prosper. There is no room here for cultural relativism. This Human Rights Council must adopt strong resolutions condemning violence and discrimination against women, and it must take a decisive action to eliminating traffic.

I’m proud that the United States is hosting a side event on the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Venezuela today. I’ll be there, and I hope you’ll be with me to hear firsthand about the serious human rights violations there. The Council must address this issue. If Venezuela cannot, it should voluntarily step down from its seat on the Human Rights Council until it can get its own house in order. Being a member of this Council is a privilege, and no country who is a human rights violator should be allowed a seat at the table.

Finally, it’s hard to accept that this Council has never considered a resolution on Venezuela, and yet it adopted five biased resolutions in March against a single country, Israel. It is essential that this Council address its chronic anti-Israel bias if it is to have any credibility.

Thank you again, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible this afternoon at the Graduate Institute.