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**Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki**

**Minister for Foreign Affairs of  
the Islamic Republic of Iran**

**before**

**the High Level Segment of  
the Seventh Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Geneva, 4 March 2008**

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**Mr. President,  
Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In the run-up to the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I am pleased to have the opportunity once again to attend this important forum to exchange views on the urgent and daunting human rights challenges facing us.

**Mr. President,**

The culture of human rights is a core component of the common heritage of humanity. It is built on the values shared in various cultures and civilizations. Diversities should never be used as an excuse to foment political and ideological confrontation. This diversity is a source of richer cultural life and needs to be truly celebrated. Achieving this aim requires our collective commitment and willingness to listen and learn from each other, to respect our cultural heritage and show tolerance and understanding towards cultural differences in human societies.

With this in mind, the Islamic Republic of Iran, hosted the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity in September 2007 the purpose of which was to articulate the standards required to command greater respect for the cultural rights of nations and the universality of human rights through inter-cultural relations and building consensus that will help constructing an international system on the basis of inclusion, justice, equality and human dignity.

Establishment of Human Rights Council, based on valuable experiences learned from shortcomings and strengths of Commission on Human Rights, provided us with new hopes and motives to reconsider urgent human right issues, which we need to deal with, in order to find sound and decent solutions to the existing challenges.

Human Rights Council must be the focal point of reliance, hope and participation for all peoples and governments to address global human rights challenges, and a forum for dialogue, understanding and cooperation to achieve universal realization of human rights. Now, a pertinent question arises whether the Human Rights Council would be able to address human rights issues and challenges and rectify the present shortcomings of the UN human rights machinery, or it would simply add to the atmosphere of mistrust and the crisis of confidence which has been buffering the whole human rights system in the past several decades.

We maintain that the reform of the UN in the field of human rights may not bear fruits unless partiality, selectivity and double standard are prevented. Also there is a need for approaching human rights issues in a comprehensive, cooperative and constructive way. Manipulation and abuse of the United Nations human rights mechanisms and machinery which has become a prevalent tradition and exercise in

advancing political purposes, should not be let anymore to diminish the credibility, efficiency and legitimacy of these mechanisms.

In this respect, the mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review constitutes a breakthrough in the work of the United Nations intergovernmental human rights activity. The rationale behind the proposal of this mechanism was to ensure universality, objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality in the work of the Human Rights Council. The real performance of this mechanism, in a logical setting, should allow the human rights machinery to act beyond the monopoly, maintained by a few in the past, in monitoring the human rights situations in different countries.

The real challenge before the Council, in this domain, is to ensure that the monitoring system works truly as a universal mechanism in addressing the human rights situations worldwide. That requires the Council to adopt a balanced and integrated approach and enforce the unified set of criteria and terms of reference in all situations alike.

In this context, we are of the view that the international community should equally pay attention to human rights situations in all corners of the world without exception or ulterior considerations. Hence, this is the time we practically put an end to the practice of overlooking the situation of human rights in the West where the rights of certain segments of society particularly minorities, aboriginals and immigrants are systematically and persistently infringed. Setting up secret prisons, abducting persons, trials and secret punishments without any regard to due process, extensive tapping of telephone conversations, intercepting private mail, and frequent summons to police and security centers have become commonplace and prevalent.

**Mr. President,**

We are of the view that Human Rights Council, as the most competent UN human rights institution, is the most pertinent forum where we should seriously address the plights of Palestinian people under the brutal occupation of the Zionist regime. The Zionist regime continues and even intensifies its heinous crimes against the oppressed and defenseless Palestinian people in defiance of human rights principles, international law, UN resolutions and even the basic norms of decency. They are subjecting the Palestinian people including women and children to an untold and unprecedented violence, committing the most horrendous repressive acts to crush the legitimate struggle of Palestinians. That regime attacks villages, towns, refugee camps, hospitals, and just within the past few days it has brutally killed more than a hundred civilians, including women and children with impunity while enjoying the unqualified support of certain States in the Security Council and elsewhere.

**Excellencies,**

The world is experiencing new forms and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, mostly in the northern hemisphere, which could by itself endanger peace and co-existence within and between societies. Alarmed with the ongoing developments, we attach great importance to the holding of Durban Review Conference in 2009 and its preparatory process. The Islamic Republic of Iran will actively participate in the Durban Review Conference and commits itself to play an active and constructive role, as we did in Durban Conference in 2001.

The growing tendency towards Islamophobia is a critical issue facing Muslims and requires United Nations human rights mechanism's urgent attention and appropriate action. The continuation of this vicious phenomenon in various forms including through insulting Islamic sanctities and holy personalities, tarnishing the image of Islam and Muslims, and spreading hatred and prejudice against them, is a serious threat that requires a collective response particularly through this august UN body. There is a growing trend in applying double standards by the Western countries with regard to the freedom of expression. For them, insulting sanctities of Islam is simply justifiable under the pretext of freedom of expression.

**Mr. President,**

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that in this crucial juncture, in which we are facing real human rights challenges, Council relying on principles of objectivity, impartiality, transparency and consensus should, in discharge of its historical mandate, undertake to address global human rights challenges, and rectify the present shortcomings of the UN human rights machinery. In this regard, we are determined to continue our constructive cooperation with the Council for the promotion and protection of human right all over the world.

**Thank you.**