



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

**Ninth Session  
of the Human Rights Council**

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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Hisham Badr  
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
on behalf of the African Group  
under agenda Item 2 entitled  
Update by the High Commissioner**

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**Geneva, 8 September 2008**

*Please check against delivery*

**Mr. President**  
**Mme High Commissioner**

I am honored and privileged to deliver before this august body my very first statement since assuming the post of Permanent Representative of Egypt two days ago.

**Mr President**

In my capacity as Coordinator of the African Group for Human Rights, I have the honor to express the appreciation of the Group to High Commissioner Mme Navanetham Pillay for her important and thoughtful statement. Africa is proud that it is now the turn of one of its own eminent jurist and human rights defenders to be at the helm of the Office at this important juncture in which the institution building process of the Council has been completed and in which the latter is turning its full attention to the effective execution of its mission.

The African Group pledges its full cooperation with the High Commissioner, and its keenness to usher a new chapter in what we want to be a genuinely constructive and productive relationship. We are committed to ensuring the success of the High Commissioner's mission, and to facilitate that both the Office and the Council fully exercise their respective mandates. Indeed, it has always been our objective to build a complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship between both institutions ... a relationship which would help achieve a qualitative change in the state of human rights worldwide ... and in which the agenda of the international human rights machinery would truly incorporate the interests and concerns of all.

**Mr President**

The African Group believes that we all share ownership of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the ensuing rich legacy of international human rights conventions. These are the product of the collective contributions of all societies, cultures and religions throughout history. Hence, African countries like all others, are committed to their full implementation.

**Mr President**

The African Group shares the vision of the High Commissioner for a global culture of human rights that would be a unifying rather than a divisive force. Like her, we want to make the international

human rights system more effective. Like her, we want to ensure that this system be guided by the principle of impartiality and adheres to consistent standards applied equally to all without any politicization, selectivity or double standards. Like her we believe that all human rights are interrelated and mutually reinforcing and that there should be no hierarchy between the two sets of rights. Finally, like her, we believe that the yardstick for evaluation remains the degree to which there has been concrete improvement in the daily lives of individual human beings around the world.

This is why the African Group believes that OHCHR has a critical role to play, through forging an open, transparent, and constructive dialogue with member states, on the basis of mutual respect. We believe that the credibility and efficiency of OHCHR hinges on, and would be reinforced by, reflecting the world's civilizations, geographic, cultural and legal wealth and diversity in composition and output of the Office. In keeping with the best practices of other organizations including in the UN system itself and beyond such as the World Bank, the Country Engagement Strategies of the Office with regards to individual countries and regions should be developed through a structured and transparent process of consultations with them. We also believe that it would be beneficial that a dialogue with the High Commissioner and her staff be conducted on the philosophy of establishing field presence, and the most cost effective manner to do so, after an independent evaluation of the record thus far would have been undertaken preferably by an independent expert, and upon seeking the views of all the different stakeholders.

**Mr. President**

As the fight against racism is indeed an integral part of the global human rights agenda, the African Group joins the call of the High Commissioner for all countries to join the process for the review of the Durban Conference on racism. We reaffirm that the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and their new manifestations witnessed since September 11, remains a global priority. The African Group is committed to a successful review conference that strengthens the implementation of the consensual outcome adopted in 2001. For our part, we just concluded a very successful African preparatory meeting in Abuja, and we call on all partners to provide similar contributions to enrich the process and to ensure the collective ownership of its outcome.

**Mr President**

We should all strive to create a world free of hunger, diseases, poverty, man-made disasters, conflicts and foreign occupation, and where the dignity of the human person is effectively upheld and protected ... a world where international solidarity prevails and in which national responsibility is coupled with a genuine commitment by the international community to cooperate and assist, and where the right to development is effectively realized for all.

The African Group is committed to the advancement of women and to the realization of their human rights, in addition to combating gender discrimination and all forms of violence against women, and enabling them to contribute equally with men in the development of their societies, and to play their role in peace-building and conflict resolution.

The African Group welcomes the steps taken by OHCHR to hold two seminars on the prevention of genocide and to explore the implications of articles 19 and 20 of the ICCPR with a view to contribute to achieving a balance between freedom of expression and the need to protect against incitement to racial and/or religious hatred and violence. We trust that such initiatives represent an opportunity to address critical concerns of people around the world, and to forge a consensual and united response addressing the root causes of threats and new and emerging issues.

**Mr President**

In closing, let me once again wish you success in steering our work during this third cycle, and assure you and Mme High Commissioner of the commitment of the African Group to its success, and to practically contribute to the advancement of the cause of human rights.

**I thank you**