

EGYPT



مصر

The Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations
New York

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**Statement of
H.E. Ambassador Maged A. ABDELAZIZ
The Permanent Representative**

**At the Third Committee
on**

**Agenda Item 64:
“Promotion and Protection of Human rights”**

New York- 21 October 2008

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Mr. Chairman,

The celebration this year of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents an important occasion to reiterate the lofty principles we all agreed to make them the foundation of collective effort in the field of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is also a reminder of our commitment according to the UN Charter and agreed international instruments to work towards reinforcing the universal respect of human rights for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

Undoubtedly, international collective efforts have recently been witnessing serious steps aiming at reformulating the international drive for the effective undertaking of human rights issues, making them a common denominator that unites all societies, aside from politicization, selectivity and double standards. Such steps already showed a success, which was reflected in the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the endorsement of its institutional building package, and then the launch of the Universal Review Mechanism and the review process of the mandates of the special procedures. These steps usher in a new era, in which the issues related to human and people's rights are tackled within a clear institutional framework that is based on constructive cooperation, distant from confrontation... One that rests on unified standards, in a manner that ensures integrating the roles played by all existing human rights mechanisms, and without tilting the balance to focus on certain aspects of human rights on the expense of the others.

Mr. Chairman,

The peoples of the world aspire for more democracy, political reform, development and reinforcing respect for human rights. At the same time, we endeavour to intensify international cooperation to realize economic development, implement the Millennium Development Goals, and respond the Africa's special needs in the context of an unfavourable international economy, overshadowed by the financial markets crisis and the food, fuel and climate crises, with their economic negative repercussions over the realisation of more progress on human rights issues. Meanwhile, we still witness attempts on the part of a few to impose their viewpoint vis-à-vis how to apply the concepts and internationally agreed standards, in a manner that diverts us away from our aim to consolidate an international collective action that is based on reinforcing cooperative relations, complementarity and capacity building. It is therefore incumbent upon us to redirect international efforts toward the realisation of our common goals on a number of key tracks.

Our point of departure should be to confront the increasing sense of superiority that some have, based on a flawed assumption that their values, cultures and social and legal justice systems are superior to others, and their subsequent attempts to impose their own standards as international ones. We should not be misguided by the attempts to limit the consideration of human rights issues to those related to civil and political rights, on the expense of the economic, social and cultural rights that come on top of the concerns of peoples in developing countries. Meanwhile, we should adopt an objective approach based on equality, respect for the principles of International Law and the complementarity between International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law.

Achieving that entails reinforcing the international attention on the "right to development" as one of the fundamental rights that is intrinsically interrelated with other rights. That requires enhancing coordination between the relevant United Nations organs, programmes and funds, which are deal with human rights, economic and social development and international financial institutions. Such coordination is essential in order to mitigate the gap between North and South, hence allowing for the provision of better living standards that contribute to the promotion of human rights, with no attached conditionalities that aim at imposing controversial concepts, or linking them to development assistance and programmes.

It also entails respecting the institutional balance between the principal UN organs, particularly the prerogatives of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in supervising the activities of the Human Rights Council, special procedures and treaty-bodies, putting an end to utilising the Security Council as a tool to politicise human rights questions. On the other hand, there should be a clearer commitment not to supersede the mandates of the Third Committee as the negotiating body of the General Assembly on human rights issues. Equally, there should be a clearer commitment not to surpass the mandates of the Human Rights Council through the presentation of country-specific resolutions, or the creation of parallel structures through attempting to broaden the authorities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights unnecessarily beyond its own mandate, or by means of appointing people in the offices of the UN developmental programmes to be responsible for monitoring human rights situations in developing countries alone, in contravention with the principles of equality in monitoring human rights situation in developing and developed countries alike.

On the other hand, it entails reinforcing the foundation laid by the 2005 Summit Document, that protecting human rights is primarily the responsibility of national governments, with effective assistance from the international community, and within the boundaries of full respect of the principles of non-intervention in domestic affairs and respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. We should remain firm on our commitment to the relevant paragraphs in the Summit Document when we work in the General Assembly on creating a comprehensive international understanding of the "responsibility to protect" and "human security". The starting point in this regard is the strengthening of early warning capabilities, reliance on authenticated non-politicized information, and directing international attention to supporting the capability of national governments to shoulder their responsibilities to promote and protect human rights, mainly through the provision of consultation and technical and financial support that bolsters national efforts. That in turn requires increasing the amount allocated to national capacity building in budgets of resident coordination offices of the High Commission for Human Rights, correcting the geographical distribution imbalance in the staffing structures of the Office of the High Commissioner, striking the balance between the assessed regular budget and voluntary contributions, and decreasing the percentage of earmarked funding.

In order to reinforce all these efforts on the national level, it is imperative to combat with solid determination all forms of extremism, discrimination, racism and xenophobia, which are deeply related to the attempts to defame religions and scorn their symbols under the pretext of freedom of opinion and expression. In parallel, we should seek to establish a constructive dialogue that is based on respect of cultural identities and particularities, in order to deepen mutual understanding and tolerance. We should endeavour to realise that in a manner that contributes to the elimination of incitement to hatred, be it on racial or religious grounds, so as to strike the balance between the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of expression and the right of the adherents of different religions to manifest their religion and preserve their identity freely without restrictions. That similarly requires stronger commitment to respect human rights while countering terrorism, based on our international commitments, the latest of which are contained in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr. Chairman,

Egypt is proceeding with gradual, calculated and confident steps to promote and protect human rights, resting on well-founded legal and constitutional bases for the protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens, side-by-side the established international legal principles to which Egypt is committed in the field of human rights. Accordingly, Egypt is exerting parallel efforts continually to improve the constitutional and legal legislations to

encourage the communal role in articulating and monitoring the respect of human rights through creating effective ombudsmen offices and national mediation institutions, while undertaking promoting awareness campaigns to ensure the continuous enhancement and increasing respect of these rights for all citizens with no exception.

These efforts began with the promotion of freedom of opinion and the media, and encouraging the role of the civil society and the private sector in supporting the democratic process. It also involved reinforcing the equality of all citizens in their rights and obligations through emphasising the concept of citizenship in the Constitution and extensive efforts toward the protection of the rights of the child and persons with disabilities and the full empowerment of women. Such efforts extended to the adoption of constitutional amendments through a referendum to create to a larger degree a balance of power between the Presidency and the Government, while enhancing the Parliament's power to supervise it and consolidating the independence and authority of the judiciary, in addition to abolishing State Security Courts and hard labour sentences and the ongoing consideration of an Anti-Terror Bill to replace the Emergency Law.

Egypt will continue her pursuit of ensuring and protecting human rights on the national level, with a clear national vision and earnest determination, which are based on an internal solid conviction that it is the right path towards comprehensive development. In our view, this may only be achievable within a framework of partnership between the Government, the people, civil society and the private sector in mapping national policies and strategies, and their implementation, for the benefit of every Egyptian citizen.

Thank you.