

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Session**  
**(2-27 March 2009)**

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**Statement by**  
**Chargé d'Affaires of the United States of America**  
**Mark C. STORELLA**

**Geneva**  
**March 4, 2009**

*(Check against delivery)*

**High-Level Segment Intervention**  
**March Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Statement by Chargé d'Affaires of the United States of America,**  
**Mark C. Storella**  
**4 March 2009**

Thank you, Mr. President.

It is my great pleasure to be here today, and to address this body, on behalf of the United States.

My government has made the affirmative decision to actively re-engage as an observer in the Human Rights Council. We look forward to participating in the Council's deliberations and working closely with you in the coming weeks and throughout the year.

Indeed, we have much work to do. The challenges of this Council are many – as are those facing human rights advocates around the world.

As President Obama said in his recent address to a Joint Session of the United States Congress, “In words and deeds, we are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone. We cannot shun the negotiating table, nor ignore the foes or forces that could do us harm. We are instead called to move forward with the sense of confidence and candor that serious times demand.”

The United States looks forward to joining you in this and future sessions, and pledges to work alongside all those working in good faith to promote and protect the human rights of every person around the world.

A common refrain dominated last December's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights: While we are proud and grateful for the progress the world has made since 1948, there is much left to be done. In his inaugural address, President Obama reminded us that every generation must carry forward the belief that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

We look forward to working with all Member and Observer States to do our best to achieve these aims. We will expect – of ourselves and of the governments in this chamber representing every region of the world – a willingness to overcome our differences and to unite in this common purpose.

Let me also state the United States remains concerned about the politicization of human rights, and about this Council's repeated singling out of one country. We are concerned about this Council's failure thus far to address some of the most egregious human rights violations in the world today, and about isolated but alarming attempts by some to use Council resolutions to undermine universal human rights, such as freedom of expression. We call on all in this

chamber to recommit to advancing human rights for all – and to end the politicization of this effort.

Together, we need to ask this Council to address all human rights violations regardless of where they occur. We will seek to assure the power of the Human Rights Council—and indeed the United Nations—is used to promote and protect the human rights of all.

This Council must be one that courageously calls governments to account and that amplifies the voices of those oppressed by their governments. It must not be a refuge for governments seeking to deflect criticism or hide from their own record or undermine human rights protections. We will ask that the Council remain squarely focused on its mandate, that it not be distracted by politics and debates in other forums.

Our country recognizes that the protection and advancement of human rights is a permanent endeavor. We are all guided by universal principles that we committed to uphold. We can all learn from best practices of others. We draw strength in this quest to enhance human dignity not only by pointing out the faults of others, but also in recognizing our own shortcomings and learning how to overcome them. Working to redress and preclude abuses at home and abroad is not interference in internal affairs, but is a demonstration of solidarity in improving respect for human rights worldwide.

Indeed, the story of the United States is one of a constant quest for the more perfect union our constitution promises, for the realization of rights of all our citizens. We are dedicated to that endeavor at home and seek to work with all of you to advance human rights around the world. We owe this intense and determined focus to those around the world who are struggling for recognition of their universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As we go forward, the United States pledges to use every opportunity to strengthen old partnerships and forge new ones. Our participation as an active observer is a sign of the commitment of the U.S. Administration to advancing the cause of human rights and strengthening the effectiveness of international institutions. We look forward to working closely with all of you.

Mr. President, I would like to extend our appreciation to you personally for the professional and dignified manner in which you have led this body.

Madam High Commissioner, we congratulate you on your newly appointed position and wish you the very best in your important work in the years ahead.

Thank you