



KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Address by

H.E. Dr. Bandar bin Muhammad ALAIBAN

President of the Human Rights Commission

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In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by congratulating H.E. Ambassador Sihasak Phuangketkeow, the President of the Council, on the successes that have been achieved in the Council's work under his presidency. I am confident that these successes will continue and your distinguished Council will achieve the results to which we are all aspiring during the work of this session.

I also wish to commend the endeavours made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, to whom we are grateful for the visit that she paid last year to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during which she met with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud; a meeting in which she was impressed by his clear vision of the importance of building bridges of dialogue and cooperation between peoples, and by the Kingdom's concern for the promotion and protection of human rights at the national, regional and international levels. That successful visit helped considerably to strengthen cooperation between the Kingdom, the Office of the High Commissioner and the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the comprehensive reforms and ongoing development of laws and regulations in numerous fields including, in particular, the judicial and political systems, the economy, enhancement of governmental performance, the anti-corruption campaign, consolidation of the principle of national dialogue, the promotion of human rights, broader participation by women and implementation of regulations to protect their rights and further the welfare of citizens, have constituted prominent and characteristic features of the reign of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, may God preserve him. They have established the basic foundations for a comprehensive national renaissance, within the framework of gradual and balanced progress towards fulfilment of the aspirations of society in a manner consistent with the Islamic Shari'a, through a clear vision of the formulation of an integrated national plan

focusing on the human person as the fundamental objective of development and reform. These reforms, which are proceeding in accordance with the requirements and needs of Saudi society, are achieving notable success while, at the same time, preserving established social values and avoiding any disruption of the stability and security of society

Within this framework, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques recently promulgated a further series of decisions making provision for more than 110 billion riyals in support for housing, education, social security, job-creation and other development programmes in the Kingdom in order to raise the standard of living of all sections of society, thereby highlighting the Government's desire to ensure that all its citizens enjoy a decent life.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom has adopted a clearly defined policy based on tolerance and dialogue among all civilizations and cultures in order to promote coexistence and mutual understanding in a world characterized by cultural and religious diversity and has pursued numerous initiatives and practical policies to this end.

At the domestic level, a National Centre for Dialogue has been established, in which all members and sectors of society participate, with a view to consolidating national unity and furthering responsible freedom of expression and discussion of national issues.

At the international level, the initiative of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques calling for dialogue among the followers of religions and cultures, which was launched at Makkah and followed up by conferences and forums, gave practical expression to the Kingdom's vision and policy of building on the common denominators of shared human values and opposing manifestations of conflict, hostility and hatred.

In continuation of these endeavours, the final arrangements are currently being made for the establishment of the World Centre for Inter-Faith and Inter-Cultural Dialogue in the city of Vienna, Austria, where a comprehensive programme for dialogue will be launched to promote the concept of coexistence, tolerance and peace among societies.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some Arab and Islamic States are currently witnessing numerous occurrences accompanied by distressing acts of violence, notwithstanding the need to let wisdom prevail by addressing those occurrences in such a way as to safeguard the integrity and stability of those States and the interests and welfare of their peoples. In this connection, we stress the need for an immediate cessation of acts of violence, in all its forms, and recourse to national dialogue in order to avoid bloodshed and preserve the security, stability and achievements of those peoples. In this connection, we stress the need for an immediate cessation of acts of violence, in all its forms, and recourse to national dialogue in order to avoid bloodshed and preserve the security, stability and achievements of those peoples.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes the discussion groups that will be held during this session on a number of issues, particularly the need to show concern for the rights and social integration of persons with disabilities, and the rights of the child. In this connection, I wish to point out that the Kingdom has pursued numerous initiatives designed to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities living in its territory. In 2008, the Kingdom acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto and has promulgated numerous legislative acts and national programmes, including the Regulations for the Care of the Disabled, to cater for the welfare of this category of persons so dear to our hearts. The allowances granted to the disabled have been increased by 100 % and annual governmental subsidies are paid to private day care centres and centres run by national committees and charitable associations to enable them to cater for persons with severe or medium disabilities. The Kingdom is proud of the commendation that it received from the High Commissioner, Ms. Pillay, who described the endeavours made by the Kingdom's Association for Disabled Children as "extraordinary" and expressed admiration for what she had observed.

The Kingdom is showing great concern for the rights of the child and has made concerted endeavours to enable all governmental, national and private institutions to provide comprehensive child care in accordance with development plans designed to ensure the welfare, education and protection of children. One of the most outstanding

endeavours consisted in the establishment of the Saudi National Commission for Childhood. The Kingdom is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and has acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

The Consultative Council has adopted a bill of law to protect children from harm and neglect which makes provision for appropriate mechanisms, within the framework of the Family Security Programme, to protect children in Saudi society from any form of abuse. In order to safeguard the rights of the child, promote greater public awareness and strengthen protection mechanisms, an emergency hot line has been established to protect children from violence and physical abuse and assist families to deal with such situations.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recent years have witnessed a notable escalation in incitement to religiously motivated hatred. The rights of religious, and especially Muslim, minorities were affected in a number of countries during events that took place last year. Although differing viewpoints have been expressed in past years concerning the wording of a resolution condemning defamation of religions, there are common denominators, such as the need to oppose anything that would entail violations of human rights, on which there is universal agreement. Accordingly, there is a pressing need to reach a consensus on this important issue.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The review of the performance and working methods of the Human Rights Council, which has been high on the agenda for more than a year, reflects the concern of States to enhance its work and increase its effectiveness in the light of the experience that has been gained during the last five years. We share the view of other States that this review process does not imply a restructuring of, or radical changes to, the Council. The outcome of the consensus achieved last week shows that there is general acceptance of the working procedures of the Council, which has demonstrated its ability to overcome the challenges that it has faced. The Council has made significant achievements including, in particular,

the Universal Periodic Review mechanism that has provided an opportunity to become acquainted, in a spirit of interactive cooperation, with the experiences of States, as well as the challenges that they are facing, in the field of human rights. I would like to conclude my remarks on this point by commending the prominent role that the President of the Council has played in the achievement of a consensus on the results of the review process.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed the first visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Palestinian territories during which she observed the tragic circumstances in which the Palestinian people have been living under occupation for more than six decades, the manner in which the occupation authorities are violating the Palestinian people's rights, and the suffering caused by the way in which the Palestinian people are being effectively intimidated by the iniquitous Israeli policies. The High Commissioner confirmed the illegality of the settlements, the separation wall and the annexation of occupied East Jerusalem, emphasized that human rights in Palestine are inalienable and non-negotiable, and called for the lifting of the "illegal" blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip. From this rostrum, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses the need to take the necessary steps and measures to ensure that the United Nations resolutions are enforced and applied, since the victims have not yet obtained redress, no action has been taken on the findings of Justice Goldstein's report, and Israel is continuing its blockade of Gaza and its policy of collective punishment against one and a half million Palestinians in the Strip. An assurance of justice and the lifting of oppression is a basic prerequisite to prevent further violations of international law and, in particular, human rights law and international humanitarian law, and equitable treatment of the victims is the keystone for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region. In this regard, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expresses its condemnation of Israel's ongoing violations of the human rights of the Palestinians and, especially, its settlement policy which runs counter to United Nations resolutions, and its denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank the President of the Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and wish this session every success in its work.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Peace be with you and the Mercy and Blessings of God.