



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

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Sameh Shoukry  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative**

**First Session  
of the Human Rights Council**

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**unofficial translation**

**Geneva, 21 June, 2006**

**Mr. President,**

**I congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the Human Rights Council, and assure you that we stand ready to fully cooperate with you and provide you with all the necessary assistance in order to facilitate your task.**

**The creation of the Human Rights Council reflects the will of the members of the international community to work together for the promotion and protection of human rights in all fields and at all levels, national and international. We all hope that the establishment of the Council will mark a qualitative shift in this domain. This necessitates drawing on the lessons of the past in order to maximize the benefits that all peoples can reap from the international human rights system, thus guaranteeing the realization of these rights and enhancing the credibility of the system.**

**Mr. President,**

**As we advocate today establishing an institutional structure where constructive dialogue and fruitful cooperation will prevail for the promotion and protection of the rights of all individuals and peoples on the basis of justice and equality, we do so inspired by our civilization that founded and guaranteed the primacy of the rule of law in its territory since the dawn of history. Egyptian people possess a deeply held belief that every individual and people has the right to a dignified life where they fully enjoy their inalienable rights.**

**Based on these deeply rooted principles, Egypt contributed to international efforts to promote and protect human rights through its active participation in the preparatory works leading to the adoption of the International Declaration on Human Rights. Egypt has ratified all core human rights conventions, its constitution of 1971, comprised all the rights and freedoms contained in these core instruments. The Egyptian constitution includes special provisions for the protection of these rights, it reaffirms their universality and guarantees that no statutory limitations apply to civil and criminal legal action arising from their violation, in addition to ensuring the obligation of the State to compensate victims of human rights violations.**

Further, the international human rights instruments that Egypt has ratified form an integral part of Egyptian National Law in conformity with article 151 of the Constitution. This commitment to international human rights law is grounded in strong political will that seeks to guarantee the realization of all fundamental rights and freedoms and promote tolerance and a culture of peace .

Mr. President,

Egypt believes that it is imperative to respect different cultures and civilizations on the basis of the principles of tolerance and acceptance of the other, as well as in the right of all peoples to choose their own value systems. Rejection of the other only fuels racism and discrimination and generates hatred and animosity in hearts and minds, it also diminishes the credibility of the human rights system as a whole. In this context, we find that efforts aimed at imposing specific value systems on peoples is tantamount, in practice, to negating the existence of other cultures and civilizations, this can only have negative implications on international relations, as proven by the recent crisis arising from the publication of caricatures defaming the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

Guided by this clear vision for human rights, we're of the view that human rights reform must be pursued in the framework of the comprehensive reform of all United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, as well as strengthening the role of the General Assembly, this would enable the UN to achieve the noble goals for which it was established.

In the same vein, efforts aimed at the reform of the human rights machinery must focus on substance not form, hence tackling the main obstacles that undermined the work of the Commission on Human Rights and prevented the effective fulfillment of its mandate, in addition to eliminating the politicization of its work and the selectivity that prevailed in dealing with human rights violations, and the concentration of its work on promoting civil and political rights in comparison to economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development.

We thus believe that the mere transformation of the Commission into a Council is not in itself the guarantor of a more effective human rights machinery, unless this new body can address the aforementioned deficiencies. In this context, I would like to emphasize the following:

- 1- The Council should avoid politicization and the use of double standards by adopting civilized and constructive dialogue as the foundation of its work, it should distance itself from confrontation, condemnation and contempt for cultures, and concentrate instead on cooperation and building states' capacities to assist them in fulfilling their human rights obligations, it must also observe the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states, and refrain from using human rights as a means of exercising pressure on states for political or economic purposes.
- 2- The new Council should function as a democratic forum, reflecting, not only in the composition of its membership, but also in its working methods and its approach to addressing human rights issues, the various cultural systems and civilizations in the world, in addition to considering their vital causes without distinction or exception. In this context, we would like to reiterate that it is imperative that the Council consider, without delay, the repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, as occupation constitutes a grave breach of human rights and a violation of the right to self-determination. The Council must also continue its consideration of the fight against racism and defamation of religions. Furthermore, we call on the Council to assume a leading role in protecting the human rights of civilians in armed conflict, taking into account the provisions of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. This call is founded on our firm belief that observing this holistic and integrated approach to human rights, is the cornerstone for building friendly relations between nations.

- 3- **The functions and the mandate of the Council should be based on the principle that all human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, and interdependent, and that all human rights' issues should be addressed in a fair, balanced and objective manner. Equal attention should be accorded to all rights - economic, social, cultural, civil, and political - as well as the Right to Development.**
- 4- **The Council is a subsidiary body of the UNGA, accordingly, it should address all its reports and recommendations thereto.**
- 5- **The "Universal Periodic Review" mechanism should be based on dialogue and cooperation, and should be applied in an objective, impartial and non -politicized manner to all states on the basis of the information and reports provided by the state concerned.**
- 6- **Given the important role that the treaty bodies play in the field of human rights, we welcome the on-going inter-committee discussions on harmonizing guidelines and other ideas relevant to reforming the treaty bodies' system with the objective of improving its effectiveness and efficiency through greater coordination and harmonization of the work of the different bodies. Any reform, however, should be directed towards enabling the developing countries in meeting the onerous task of submitting their periodic reports and implementing the recommendations of the Treaty Bodies. To this end, we stress the importance of increasing technical assistance to developing countries.**
- 7- **We also support the valuable work of the Special Procedures and emphasize the need to rationalize their work with a view to strengthening them in terms of operational capabilities and reducing duplication of efforts, and ensuring that the process of their nomination remains transparent, predictable, and based on the principle of equitable geographical representation.**

- 8- We strongly believe that the role and work of the Sub-Commission as an independent think-tank should be preserved, and further strengthened, along the lines of its current methods of work.
- 9- We attach great importance to the participation of NGOs and their valuable contribution to the work of the Human Rights Council, within the framework of ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.
- 10- In view of our belief in the important role that the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office can play in the promotion and protection of human rights, we emphasize that in carrying out its mandate, the Office should give priority to aspects that are crucial to the promotion and protection of human rights, particularly to advisory services and technical cooperation, we also emphasize the need for transparency and the involvement of states in the planning of the policies and programs of the Office. Moreover, adequate consideration should be given for equitable geographical distribution in the appointment of the staff of the OHCHR, and to the establishment of a mechanism that allows for periodic review of the activities of the OHCHR in furtherance of the principles of accountability and transparency.

Finally, I wish to express our firm commitment to cooperate with the Council with a view to promoting and protecting human rights, out of a strong conviction that human rights' issues concern all of us - members of the international community- no single power or state can claim monopoly of the virtue of human rights, and that human rights issues' transcend time limits to protect people's culture and heritage, to protect the dignity and rights of our future generations, and to impinge on current issues of development, democracy, peace and justice at national and international levels.

Thank you Mr. President.