



UNITED STATES MISSION TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

United States Right of Reply
Geneva, June 20, 2006

Mr. President,

This first session of the Human Rights Council has been anticipated by many nations as a new chapter in the history of the international community's efforts to promote and protect human rights. The members of the Council made earnest and exemplary pledges on human rights implementation during the election for membership. Pledges the world expects them to keep.

Cuba, rather than explain how it intends to comply with its pledge, chose instead to engage in gratuitous and unfounded attacks against the United States. Perhaps it is because those pledges sound hollow, especially in the ears of the Cuban people.

The United States provided leadership in the world's efforts to spread freedom, democracy, and justice for all peoples throughout the 20th century. In the 21st century, our commitment to fight for the rights of the abused and repressed remains intact. We will work with Council Members to support the United Nations' historic mission to promote and protect the human rights of all the world's citizens.

I want, however, to make one thing clear. The American people need no one else to speak for them, particularly officials of an autocratic government. They are, and always have been, free to speak with their own voices through free and fair elections, through open and active participation in civil society, and through a free and uncensored media.