

Explanation of Position
by the United States Delegation on the draft resolution
“Review of the Work and Functioning of the Human Rights Council”
Human Rights Council
March 25, 2011

Mr. President,

It is with regret that the United States must disassociate from consensus on the resolution entitled “Review of the Work and Functioning of the Human Rights Council.” The U.S. position on this issue, and our disappointment with the process that brought us to this place, are well known.

Throughout the negotiations, the United States made clear that the Council must conduct a thorough review that would lead to real improvements in its ability to meet its core mission: promoting and protecting human rights. Frankly, the Council has come up short. While we appreciate the President’s and the facilitators’ efforts over the past months, we are frustrated that the open-ended working group’s work seemed dominated by the repetition of tired and divisive positions, rather than a genuine exploration of new ways to improve the Council’s ability to address serious human rights situations around the world.

Without a doubt, the Council's disproportionate and biased treatment of Israel is its Achilles heel. The effectiveness and legitimacy of this Council can never be complete as long as one country is unfairly and uniquely singled out for its own agenda item, while others, including chronic human rights abusers subject to UN General Assembly action, escape similar scrutiny. The lone agenda item on Israel provides ammunition to those who seek to discredit the hard work of every delegate in this room.

Mr. President,

The review process is not the only way to improve the work of this body. The Human Rights Council can be as responsive and focused as its Member States demand. We owe it to the victims of human rights abuses to demand much of ourselves. The United States will continue to seek to improve the work of this Council by engaging actively and collaboratively to achieve those goals. We are proud to have been a part of many initiatives over the past 18 months to address critical human rights situations. We worked with dedicated Council members to create by consensus new Special Rapporteurs on urgent and compelling issues such as Freedom of Association, and we collectively galvanized the Council to address

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grave abuses in Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Iran, and elsewhere. We have crossed regional divides on issues of discrimination and freedom of expression. While we regret that similar common ground for significant improvements to the Council has proven elusive in the Geneva phase of the review process, we will continue our efforts to reform this Council session by session and resolution by resolution. This review process could augment that effort significantly, and we hope that such potential will not be entirely lost.

The United States does not welcome the outcome document of this working group. But we do look forward to working with UN member states as the HRC review process continues in New York. There is still room to strengthen our work. For instance, we can ensure greater scrutiny of the human rights records of candidates for election to this body. We pledge to enter the conversation in New York in the same spirit in which we did so here, with an open mind and a willingness to find creative ways to make the Council more effective. We aim to renew the UN's commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, to the dignity and worth of the human person, and to the equal rights of men and women in nations large and small.

Thank you, Mr. President.