



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

**Sixth Session of  
the Human Rights Council**

**Organizational and Procedural Matters**

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**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Sameh Shoukry  
Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
on behalf of the African Group**

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**Geneva, 10 September, 2007**

*Please check against delivery*

Thank you Mr. President,

I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the African Group.

Let me congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency and the extensive consultations you have undertaken to ensure the smooth operation of the Council.

Allow me at the outset to thank you for the revised draft Programme of Work for the first part of the Council's 8<sup>th</sup> session, as well as that of the second part of the session due to take place in December of this year.

Before commenting on these documents, we would like to express our wish to be afforded a draft Programme of Work for the entire second cycle of the Council at the earliest time possible. The adoption of the annual Programme of Work of the Council at the present session will help achieve predictability and stability in its work. In this context, the African Group wishes to restate the position it espoused during the Organizational Meeting of the Council on 24 August, namely that the applicability of the items contained in the Council's agenda to all regular sessions, combines legality and objectivity, and is the most feasible way to proceed on this matter. Our task lies in how to best manage each of these items throughout the year, making the necessary adaptations where required.

As for the draft Programme of Work for the sixth session, the African Group has the following comments:

1- The African Group notes that the revised draft has incorporated its request to review the mandates of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Burundi, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Sudan. We have come to understand that the phrase "to be confirmed" that joins each of these three mandates suggests that the presence of the concerned mandate-holders may not be possible at this session. In this context, it would be important to emphasize that while the participation of the various mandate-holders in the discussions pertaining to the review of their mandates, in what is referred to in the draft Program of Work as "assessment of mandates", may be desirable, this, as well as the presentation of a final report, are by no means pre-conditions for conducting and concluding the review of the relevant mandates during any given session. Ultimately, the objective of the whole exercise, is the review, rationalization and improvement of

mandates. We are still of the view that the Programme of Work should capture this in explicit, not implicit, terms, and hence the African Group formally proposes that the item reads "Review, rationalization and improvement of mandates".

2- The African Group welcomes the time allotted for informal consultations on pending institutional building matters. Indeed, concluding this exercise successfully is one of the main priorities of the September session. However, sufficient time must be given to various groups and delegations to study the relevant proposals, almost all of which we have not seen before today. As we had proposed during the Organizational Meeting of the HRC on 24 August, the shaded section on Institution Building issues should not be captured under the heading of "informal meeting", but rather a formal item under which informal consultations could take place.

3- With regard to OHCHR reports, the African Group can accept, in principle, that the discussion of these reports take place in the context of the relevant agenda items. Nevertheless, we believe that an error of a technical nature may have occurred in placing the OHCHR report on Defamation of Religions under item 3, as it should be considered, for consistency, coherence and the effective conduct of our debates, along with the report of the Special Rapporteur on Racism on the same subject, under item 9 dealing with Racism.

4- On the Universal Periodic Review, the African Group has undertaken an initial consideration of the non-paper on the UPR Guidelines, and has consulted the distinguished facilitator, the Ambassador of Morocco, in this regard, whom we thank for his efforts and look forward to continue to cooperate closely with him. We also understand that the issue of the timing of the sessions of the Working Group on the UPR will be discussed under agenda item 6, in addition to the two Voluntary Trust Funds for the UPR, at the earliest time. With regard to the proper timing for the start of the UPR process, we reiterate our position that the first reviews should be held after the Council's main session in March 2008. The African Group strongly believes that creating the necessary conditions for an effective and successful UPR exercise is of paramount importance, and must take precedence over all other extraneous or secondary considerations. We also look forward to the selection of the countries to be reviewed in 2008 and other related aspects. The African Group would appreciate further clarification concerning the content of the simulation of the UPR exercise.

5- The African Group welcomes the inclusion of "discussions" on the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference in the

Programme of Work, as opposed to "the report of the Durban Prep-Com" referred to in an earlier version of the Programme. This is consistent with the decision taken at the Organizational Session of the Durban Prep-Com, in which it recommended that the Council invite the Prep-Com to submit its reports directly to the General Assembly. We look forward to confirming this decision at the present session of the Council.

6- We welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue of gender perspective in the work of the Human Rights Council at the end of the second week.

Mr. President,

In line with the request it made on several occasions, the African Group hopes that discussions will be held during this session on the institutional relationship and interaction between the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in relation to the reporting function on the activities of the OHCHR. We strongly believe that addressing this issue at an early stage in the life of the Council, would help ensure the smooth functioning of both the Council and the Office.

The African Group has also repeatedly demanded that all documents under discussion at the present session, as well as all other sessions, be made available in the official UN languages two weeks before the consideration of the relevant agenda items. We note with concern that this is not the case. For the time being, postponement of the consideration of the documents in question to a later stage during this session, or deferral to future sessions of the Council, remains a possibility. As of the sixth resumed session in December, the African Group will not be in a position to consider any documents that do not fulfill the set requirements.

Finally, on the arrangements proposed for the conduct of the discussions on the review of mandates, the African Group would like to revisit this issue later in the week.

I thank you.

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