

*Myanmar*

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**Statement  
by**

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Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar**

**at  
the High-level Segment of the  
First Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Geneva, 20 June 2006**

Mr. President, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address this historic meeting of the newly established Human Rights Council.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Government of the Union of Myanmar and on my own behalf, on your unanimous election as President of this first historic session of the Human Rights Council. We all are aware that at this very moment, being a newly created human rights body with the objective to promote and protect human rights in a more effective manner, this Council's performance has been the focus of the international community, which, we are sure, harbours extremely high hopes for the success of the Council. For these reasons you are bearing a heavy burden in guiding the deliberations of this Council so that the high expectations of the international community may be satisfied. I am fully confident that your diplomatic skills and vast experience will ensure the desired outcome from our deliberations. I assure you that, my delegation, together with others, will extend its fullest cooperation in the discharge of your heavy responsibility.

I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Council on their election, which reflects the trust of the international community in their capability to realize the objectives of the Council.

Mr. President,

The very first step is vitally important in a journey, principally because it sets the direction in which we are heading. The present session represents such a step in the journey we have to continue in our effort to bring humanity to humankind.

First of all, I wish to take this opportunity to express some of our views on certain organizational aspects of the first session of the Human Rights Council as well as on its future work. The global community will judge the Council by what it achieves in promoting and protecting human rights. In this regard, we can learn very valuable lessons from the achievements and shortcomings of the Human Rights Commission. One of its achievements was that it was able to set a commendable record of establishing norms and standards in the field of human rights. As a result, we now have a solid foundation of human rights instruments at our disposal.

Despite these major achievements, the Commission allowed itself to be abused as a forum to vilify and humiliate certain States, especially third world countries. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the greatest achievement of the Commission, clearly emphasizes the spirit of brotherhood in acting towards one another, we witnessed or experienced discrimination and selectivity. Certain States, notably, developing countries, including mine, were subjected to the injustice and indignity of double standards. The efforts of the international community exerted so far in creating a new principal human rights body will be pointless if the Council goes down the same old road of its predecessor body and the Council's work does not improve substantively. The condemnatory approach that was followed by the Commission on Human Rights must be replaced by a principle-based approach. The principles that we all hold dear, such as universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity should guide the work of the Council.

In this regard, we are encouraged by the fact that the new Council's membership is based on equitable geographical distribution and every region of the world is sufficiently represented in the Council. It is noteworthy that the majority of the Council's members is representing the developing countries. It is incumbent upon the members of the Council to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and to see to it that under no circumstances will they succumb to and be swayed by the pressure of certain states with political clout so that the future work of the Council will be devoid of politicization of the past and will not disappoint the international community.

Constructive dialogue and genuine cooperation should form the bedrock for enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights. At the same time, the Council's working methods need to be regularly reviewed so that it will not fall back to the old methods of the Human Rights Commission. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that.

Mr. President,

The first year of the Human Rights Council is a transition one. Therefore, to make the transition seamless and smooth, necessary groundwork needs to be laid down in the first year through the adoption of a robust and realistic programme of work. In this regard, to set the right priorities is extremely important. For instance, urgent matters such as universal periodic review mechanism, its modalities and necessary allotment of time for it should receive immediate attention in view of the expiry of the terms of certain members of the Council in one year. As called for in General Assembly resolution 60/251, the programme must provide for the Council to assume, revise and when necessary, improve and rationalize all mandates, mechanisms, functions, and responsibilities of the Human Rights Council. In this respect, we subscribe to the idea of establishing one or more intergovernmental working groups to be entrusted with this undertaking.

Mr. President,

The substantive work of the Human Rights Council will be reflected in the agenda that it adopts. The agenda must treat all categories of human rights, including the right to development in a fair and balanced manner. Through consultations and consensus building, the Council should ensure that particular concerns of States are accommodated to the extent possible in setting its agenda. In this respect, my delegation would like to present our views on the issues of importance to my country.

Mr. President,

General Assembly resolution 60/251 lacks clear reference to how the present Council will address country-specific situations, which had given rise to political confrontation in the Human Rights Commission. Discussions of country-specific situations became convenient vehicles to publicly shame and attack a United Nations Member State. The drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would not have envisaged such an outcome from their noble efforts. As pointed out in the earlier part of my intervention, one of the shortcomings of the Human Rights Commission had been its failure to apply the widely respected principles of non-selectivity and objectivity in a scrupulous manner. It is the view of my delegation that the said principles need to be fully applied by the Council in considering a country's situation. In the consideration of a country's situation, the validity and credibility of sources of the information used as basis should be one of the criteria for the

allegations' acceptability. Universal periodic review to be conducted on the basis of objective and reliable information should provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the existing country-specific situations.

Mr. President,

Development facilitates the enjoyment of all human rights. In 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights reaffirmed the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. The realization of the right to development is of paramount importance, in particular for the developing countries. However, some research indicates that the socio-economic gap between different regions of the world as well as within developing countries continues to grow. To our regret, in the twenty-first century, even subsistence economy still exists in certain countries. For some developing countries, necessary capital is extremely hard to come by. The flow of private investment to developing countries is unpredictable, very selective and discriminatory. As a consequence, States' capacity for the full realization of human rights has been further weakened. As if adding insult to injury, there have been artificial impediments placed on the path to development, such as unilateral sanctions imposed on us.

Mr. President,

Even if a right policy could be formulated for the development of a country, under the present circumstances, its implementation is absolutely a different matter beyond a country's control. It is one of the greatest challenges for the Human Rights Council to seek ways and means as to how it could better contribute to the promotion and realization of the right to development.

Mr. President,

With this session of the Council, we will continue the second leg of the long journey begun at the first session of the Commission on Human Rights in 1947.

Although we now adopt a different approach and enhanced human rights structure, the objective of our mission remains the same, that is to put human dignity to the forefront through the promotion and protection of human rights. Together with other members of the United Nations, we will contribute to the work of the Council. It is our hope that through concerted efforts and steadfast commitment, the Council will further strengthen the present UN Human Rights machinery and become a success story at the end of the day.

Thank you.