

Check against delivery

## **Human Rights Council 17<sup>th</sup> Session**



### **Opening Statement to the Organizational Meeting**

by

**Ms. Navi Pillay**  
**United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

**Geneva, 20 June 2011**

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Council,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The adoption by the Human Rights Council's of 29 resolutions last week is clear evidence of the headway this body continues to make with the range and span of the issues it tackles. It is indeed reassuring to follow the Council's collaborative work on multiple and multifaceted human rights situations.

Many new initiatives are conceived and launched during each of your sessions. I welcome this trend and the Council's determination to address a comprehensive picture of the human rights problems and opportunities we face. Perhaps more importantly, your work and focus reflect a commendable responsiveness to the increasing and ever more assertive demand for human rights that reverberates from quarter to quarter, from different communities and diverse stakeholders in every region of the world.

I am proud of my staff's performance in helping you carrying out your towering mandate. They work under tight deadlines in their effort to accommodate and fulfill competing tasks. Indeed, the time span allowed for implementation of the Council's decisions frequently does not concede any respite, as OHCHR strives to process the workload effectively and efficiently.

Let me be clear on this score: my colleagues and I welcome the activism of the Council. But allow me to also point out that when demands outstrip and outpace the means; when my Office is asked to absorb so many new activities without receiving the resources required to support them, we run into obstacles that are difficult to surmount. Utmost dedication, imagination, and hard work cannot in and of themselves fill the gap between the actionable and the achievable and between the optimal and the feasible.

The resolutions just adopted by the Council carry resource implications of nearly 9 and a half million dollars, with more than half of these additional costs becoming the responsibility of my Office. Several of these activities are to be implemented this year, including the extension of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Libya, at a time when OHCHR is still struggling to cover the costs of the original mandate of that Commission. And under the current budgetary procedures, the General Assembly will not even review such requirements before its session this fall. This puts my Office in a very difficult position indeed.

I know that you are all familiar with this story. In the current global financial situation, you are under pressure from your own Governments to contain costs. At the same time you are deeply aware of the many human rights challenges that need urgent or sustained attention. To the extent possible, my colleagues are finding creative solutions, spreading themselves and their resources ever thinner in accordance with the Secretary-General's encouragement to "do more with less", prioritizing and re-prioritizing their work. And invariably, we hit the limits of the possible.

As more and more mandates are handed to my Office, it is increasingly difficult for us to give them all the equal priority and attention to detail that they deserve and, indeed, demand. This ultimately means that the needs of some victims may be crowded out by the needs of other victims.

We have been most effective in those cases where my colleagues have been engaged in discussions about the structuring of the mandates – and the timeframes – from an early stage. I welcome this level of consultation, and encourage you to engage systematically my colleagues as you consider new initiatives, so as to improve the potential for their efficient and effective implementation. Such consultations could also help to identify those issues where available resources can be maximized, and—at the same time—shine a light on those areas where the existing capacity is insufficient and should be bolstered with additional funding.

In respect of the new requirements arising from the resolutions just adopted, these will be presented to the General Assembly with the annual report of the Council's activities later this year. Pending decisions by the Fifth Committee in their regard, my Office has had to manage, one way or another, but this has become increasingly impossible. We need to ensure that full additional resources are provided in line with the proposed PBIs resulting from each Resolution and new mandated activity.

Against this background, I urge State representatives in Geneva to work collaboratively with your representatives in New York, to ensure that your substantive calls at the HRC in Geneva are properly backed with the commitments of financial resources in New York.

I felt compelled to share with you the increasingly acute predicament that my Office faces. I am confident that, together, we will be able to find satisfactory solutions to properly nourish the contribution of my Office to the implementation of the Council's vision and will.

Thank you.