

الجمهورية العربية السورية

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Human Rights Commission
Chairman's Office



المملكة العربية السعودية
هيئة حقوق الإنسان
مكتب الرئيس

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**STATEMENT OF THE
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA**

DELIVERED BY

**H.E. The Minister, Mr. Turki Bin Khalid AL-SUDAIRY,
PRESIDENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA**

**AT THE 1ST SESSION OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**GENEVA,
20 JUNE 2006**

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Mr. Chairman,
(Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights,)
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in beginning my statement before this distinguished Council by expressing to you, Mr. Chairman, my sincere congratulations on your election and your assumption of the chairmanship of the first session of the Human Rights Council. Your election unquestionably reflects the extent of the respect and high esteem that both you and your country enjoy. We are confident that your wisdom, experience and wide familiarity with the various issues before this Council will ensure the successful outcome not only of this unique session but also of the subsequent sessions during the term of your chairmanship. I wish Your Excellency and your country every success and prosperity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome H.E. the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to whom I wish every success in her demanding task of promoting and protecting human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

We are currently witnessing a resolute and determined international will to promote and protect human rights in all parts of the world and in a manner more consistent with moral, cultural and religious values and with the provisions of the International Covenants as a result of the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of resolution 60/251 establishing this Council. In accordance with that auspicious initiative, the Council has therefore been convened today to begin the work of its first session with great hopes of confronting the numerous challenges that require from all of us concerted, well-intentioned endeavours and a willingness to examine this Council's objectives from a lofty humanitarian standpoint so that we can address the issues before it on an equal footing far removed from any considerations that might affect or detract from the purpose for which it was established.

While we all have great expectations of the role assigned to this Council to promote and protect human rights in an equitable and just manner that will accord equal importance to all civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development and the need to ensure respect for religious values and social and cultural particularities, we should not forget the pioneering role played by the former Commission on Human Rights, the countless achievements of which, over many decades, cannot be summed up in a few words. In spite of the criticisms that it faced and the short-sighted attitudes that detracted from the purpose for which it was established, the diligent manner in which the Commission addressed many important issues in a spirit of objectivity merits my country's respect and esteem. We must now preserve and benefit from its achievements and rectify its shortcomings.

Mr. Chairman,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was eager to become a member of this distinguished Council, as constituted by the relevant General Assembly resolution, by virtue of my country's sincere and emphatic desire to promote and protect human rights and to accord this issue due importance in such a way as to safeguard the moral and cultural values of societies which are based primarily on respect for the human person, whom God has exalted above all other creatures, and to develop a culture of tolerance, justice, equality and non-discrimination.

Since all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, from this rostrum my country's delegation to this distinguished Council emphasizes its commitment to cooperate fully with all members of the international community and with this Council in order to ensure the security, well-being and stability of our societies and to preserve the dignity and safeguard the particularities of human beings.

Mr. Chairman,

My country's delegation believes that, in order to achieve the purpose for which this Council was established, there is a need to maintain neutrality and transparency, to abide by the provisions of international humanitarian law, human rights law and the relevant international instruments, to engage in active and constructive dialogue, to avoid politicization of this Council's work and to address the issues before it on an equal footing without selectivity or double standards, taking into account the fact that there are broad concepts and comprehensive, universal aspects of human rights that require truly judicious, objective and non-discriminatory treatment.

My country derives its laws and legislation from the provisions of the magnanimous Islamic Shari'a, which treats all persons equally and advocates tolerance and harmony among all mankind. My country's Government believes that the primary responsibility for safeguarding human rights lies with Governments, supported by civil society organizations and relevant international institutions. In this context, a governmental Human Rights Commission, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, has recently been established in my country where it is playing a fully independent and transparent role in helping to protect human rights, investigating any infringements constituting violations thereof, monitoring the fulfilment of our treaty obligations, receiving any complaints concerning abuse of human rights, verifying their validity and taking the requisite procedural action thereon. There is also a National Commission, representing civil society, which is playing its role in protecting human rights and has expanded its activities to include the monitoring of conditions in prisons and reform institutions in order to ensure that the rights of prisoners and detainees are not violated.

My country has made considerable progress in its endeavours to promote and protect human rights through the adoption of measures and procedures consistent with the particularities and requirements of society rather than with theories and concepts imposed on it from abroad. To this end, the Kingdom has promulgated a Basic Law, instituted a process of national dialogue among all sections of Saudi Arabian society and broadened the powers of the Consultative Council to include the review and development of laws and regulations. Municipal elections, in which both men and women can vote, have also been held and women are playing a role in the reform process, participating effectively through employment in the public and private sectors and in governmental institutions. The judicial system has been

developed and enhanced through a number of laws and regulations concerning civil and criminal procedures and the practice of law.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In keeping with its Islamic tradition, my country's Government accords special attention to the issue of religious tolerance and respect for particularities and cultures. Experience has shown that one of the major and most intractable challenges in this regard is each society's understanding of the culture and civilization of other societies in a spirit of tolerance, respect and acceptance. However, although the Islamic World and the West share broad common principles in various fields and in numerous respects and are united by spiritual links, frequently close geographical proximity, and a cultural complementarity that moulds us in the melting pot of a single human heritage, we are still witnessing an escalation in hatred and animosity towards Islam and disdain for its values and everything that it holds sacrosanct.. Moreover, ongoing attempts are being made to associate terrorism with Islam and to portray Islam in distorted stereotyped images. You may well agree with me, Mr. Chairman, that this prejudiced and pernicious misrepresentation of Islam and the Muslims is likely to weaken if not nullify international pluralism and render inoperative the mechanisms of dialogue, criticism, counter-criticism and consultation and other international democratic processes. Therefore, purposeful and constructive dialogue among civilizations and cultures will help to change the pattern of behaviour and ideologies that are inconsistent with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two International Covenants. In this regard, I wish to assure this distinguished Council that Islam is a moderate religion that advocates mutual tolerance, empathy and coexistence and rejects fanaticism, obscurantism and coercion. My country's delegation also believes that our new world cannot be built on the concepts of conflict and hostility; on the contrary, logic demands that it should be built on the concepts of cooperation, complementarity, dialogue and mutual understanding so that reciprocal attraction will replace reciprocal aversion, so that there will be no more talk of conflict and hostility, and so that we can achieve what can be called cultural security.

Mr. Chairman,

My country is aware of the extent to which the present-day world needs to consolidate the foundations of international peace and security and save mankind from the dangers of strife and conflict. The cause of the Palestinian people and the aggression to which their land and their holy places are being subjected should prompt us all to mobilize in all international forums, including this distinguished Council, and to remind the human conscience of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people, like all other peoples, to their homeland and holy places. This state of affairs is not confined solely to Palestine; there are other Arab territories, such as the occupied Syrian Golan, under Israeli occupation. The fact that the Middle East is suffering more than other regions of the world from lack of stability, peace and security is due to Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories.

Accordingly, Mr. Chairman, this Council is called upon to take the steps and measures needed to force Israel to implement its resolutions in order to restore security and stability in the region. The ultimate purpose of this distinguished Council is not solely to disseminate awareness of human rights and to advocate respect therefor and belief in the importance thereof; its purpose is also to ensure that these rights are duly respected and observed in actual practice.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some regard the establishment of this Council as a commendable step to achieve concord, cohesion and peace among the members of the international community and to guarantee just treatment of people everywhere, without discrimination on grounds of colour, race or religion. However, what we are experiencing and witnessing poses immense challenges. Today, we are confronted with issues that require concerted, well-intentioned and diligent endeavours on the part of all of us, such as the question of poverty and the related rights to life, food, medication, education and the establishment of a proper environment conducive to tolerance and the repudiation of terrorism in the light of the fact that hunger, poverty and marginalization help to nurture extremist ideology.

There are other vital and equally important issues, such as globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of human rights, and the question of the right to development. In this connection, the Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, calls upon donor States to help to alleviate the external debt burden of the poorer countries, thereby furthering the efforts that the Governments of those countries are making to give effect to the economic, social and cultural rights of their peoples.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are confident that this first meeting of the Council will provide a valuable opportunity for discussion and for the formulation of its core programme of action and future activities. It will also provide a valuable opportunity for deliberation on issues that affect our present and future. In this regard, I wish to assure the distinguished Council that a manifestation of good intentions and a joint resolve to achieve our common objectives will create the climate that we and our future generations need in order to coexist in a world in which peace, justice, rectitude and mutual respect prevail.

It is my hope that this Council's endeavours will be fruitful and crowned with success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.