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**International workshop on**

Enhancing cooperation between United Nations and regional mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Dilip Sinha

Vice-President of the Human Rights Council

**Geneva, Palais des Nations – Room XVII**

**10.00 a.m. 8 October 2014**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me on behalf of the President of the Human Rights Council, to be present at the opening ceremony of this biannual event organized by the Office of the High Commissioner, the International Workshop on Enhancing Cooperation between United Nations and Regional Mechanisms for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. It is delightful to see this august assembly of representatives of regional human rights mechanisms, independent experts of the United Nations, representatives of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), representatives from Member States and non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Over the past few years, the Council has been also becoming increasingly interested in the work of and cooperation with regional mechanisms. Aiming at a common goal of promoting and protecting human rights worldwide, it is important that all the Council and regional mechanisms are mutually reinforcing. In this regard, there should be strategies of continuous engagement and information sharing Therefore, in its resolution 24/19 adopted in September 2013, the Council requestedthe Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to organize this workshop which is the fourth of the biennial workshops. The resolution also requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to hold three thematic discussions – on (a) the mainstreaming of economic, social and cultural rights, (b) the economic, social and cultural rights of persons with disabilities, and (c) the economic, social and cultural rights of women – based on concrete and practical experience of regional mechanisms, in order to share information on best practices, lessons learned and new possible forms of cooperation, with the participation of relevant experts from international, regional, sub-regional and interregional human rights mechanisms, as well as Members States, observers, national human rights institutions and NGOs.

The last international workshop held in 2012 made several recommendations to the States, UN and regional human rights mechanisms as well as also to other stakeholders such as national human rights institutions and NGOs. The recommendations mainly pertained to systematizing information sharing, development of shared agenda of activities, providing information for the Universal Periodic Review, cross referencing the respective jurisprudence and recommendations and development of a matrix containing the recommendations made by the UN as well as regional human rights mechanisms. Another important recommendation was to ensure capacity building of national stakeholders, particularly, judges, lawyers, NHRIs and NGOs, including on the implementation of international human rights standards and recommendations. I am confident that this workshop will contribute by taking stock of the progress made, challenges faced, lessons learned and discuss the way forward.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Council just concluded its 27th session less than two weeks ago, I would like to share with you some of the outcome of the session as well as some highlights.

The Council warmly welcomed the new High Commissioner, Mr. Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein who made the opening statement. During the three-week long session, the Council considered nearly hundred reports submitted by the High Commissioner, the Secretary-General, Special Rapporteurs and the Office of the High Commissioner. It held 10 panel discussions covering a wide range of thematic issues as well as one on South Sudan. The themes include: ensuring the use of remotely piloted aircraft or armed drones in counterterrorism and military operations in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law; the role of prevention in the promotion and protection of human rights, the violence against children, the rights of indigenous peoples in the context of natural disasters, protection of privacy in the digital age, protection of family and gender integration. Panellists from Special procedures, UN system, civil society and regional mechanisms have participated in the panels either as panellists or from the floor. The Council also held interactive dialogues with nearly 20 mandate-holders of the Special Procedures both thematic and country-specific and the Commission of Inquiry on Syria. As the outcome, the Council adopted 33 decisions and resolutions, renewed a number of both country and thematic mandates and established a new mandate on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights. This brings to the total of 53 mandates of special procedures with 39 thematic mandates and 14 country-specific.

I am very happy to state that the special procedure mechanisms of the Council and those of the regional mechanisms have enhanced the cooperation in their activities, such as participating in regional consultations, or joint country visits, and issuing joint statements, declarations and press releases on issues of common interests and concerns. Moreover, reports of the Special Procedure and that of the treaty bodies are shared with the regional mechanisms which also share their periodic reports with the UN human rights system. Indeed, the cooperation between the mechanisms of the Council with regional mechanisms is essential to deepening the understanding of human rights issues, identifying challenges with a view to making recommendations to States of the region to address these challenges. In this regard, allow me to share few examples. Let me first mention the cooperation between the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and those of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR). The two mechanisms continued to strengthen the cooperation within the framework of the Addis Ababa Roadmap adopted in 2012. Special Rapporteurs regularly participate in the sessions of the ACHPR and a systematized exchange of information has been established between the two mechanisms. The Addis Ababa Roadmap was reviewed during a consultative meeting held in April 2014 and is considered as a good practice of enhancing cooperation between the international and regional human rights systems. The activities include a joint country visit to Tunisia in 2012 by the respective Special Rapporteurs on human rights defenders; joint initiatives on business and human rights, women’s rights, the right to life, issuing joint press releases and statements, including on the abduction of school girls by Boko Haram, reprisals and torture, migrants’ human rights and the rights of the girl child, among others. In addition, representatives of five regional mechanisms participated in the session of the Working Group on Discrimination against women in Law and Practice in Geneva 2013.

Turning to the Inter-American regional mechanisms, the Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child of the Inter-American Commission, the Special Representative of the Secretary- General on Violence against Children, experts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and representatives of OHCHR, UNDP and UNICEF participated in a meeting in in May 2013 to strategize their joint actions. They also held a public event to promote ratification of treaties relating to child rights. In March 2013 the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture testified before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on the use of solitary confinement in the Americas. The Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of assembly and of association refers extensively to Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Venice Commission guidelines and also makes references to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as well as the European Court of Human Rights.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights also started the engagement with other regional mechanisms. I hope more to come for the region.

As I mentioned earlier, the UPR is another important area where the cooperation can be strengthened. UPR is now at the middle way of the second cycle, while some of the regional mechanisms including of the Americas and Europe send contributions to the UPR, I encourage other mechanisms also to do the same. These invaluable contributions bring the regional perspectives from the ground to the UPR process, therefore complement the assessments and reports of other human rights bodies or mechanisms. In return, recommendations adopted from UPR addressed to States extensively refer to regional mechanisms as well.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These are just a few but significant and good practices. The Council looks forward to hearing the developments on the ground the implementation of the recommendations of 2012 workshop, as well as the best practices in mainstreaming economic, social and cultural rights at regional level.

I wish you fruitful deliberations. Thank you for your attention.

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