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STATEMENT BY
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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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GENEVA

Mr. President,

I welcome and appreciate the opportunity to participate at this session of the Human Rights Council. Hungary aligns itself with the statement of the Presidency of the European Union, delivered yesterday by the Foreign Minister of Germany.

Mr. President,

The past year has seen major changes in the United Nations human rights system. We opened a brand new chapter with the establishment of the Human Rights Council. This is indeed an ambitious exercise for the international community to more efficiently protect human rights. My Government has given its unequivocal support to this new body from the very beginning.

The achievements of the former Commission on Human Rights, which set important norms and standards that govern our societies today, must and will stay with us. But we now have to work out the details of our enhanced intergovernmental machinery, which will provide the highest possible level of protection for people all over the world. Without any doubt, this is a major challenge for all of us.

It is my fervent hope that by the time the first year of the Council is completed, we will have in place the institutions and a far-reaching machinery capable of dealing with the challenges of the 21st century. It is in this regard that we must engage in genuine dialogue about the international promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Efforts must continue both on the definition of the Council's architecture and on the improvement of the human rights machinery as a whole.

Among the items on the agenda of the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review is one that has the potential to make it all different. It needs our attention and full cooperation, if we truly want it to succeed. Together with the treaty body system and the special procedures, the Universal Periodic Review should provide an effective system of human rights protection with far-reaching capacity for review and assistance. The Universal Periodic Review can only be effective if all of us, without exception, show a genuine willingness to undergo scrutiny by our peers.

Another aspect of the HRC which I would like to highlight here is the full and unhindered participation of non-governmental organisations in the activities of the Human Rights Council. It is vitally important that civil society, and national human rights institutions, for that matter, are able to participate meaningfully in the work of our main human rights body. Hungary is ready to continue cooperating actively with the Council as well as its mechanisms and procedures.

Mr. President,

One of the main achievements of the previous Commission on Human Rights was undoubtedly the unique system of special procedures that provides a tightly woven web of protection for civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. During the institution building phase of the Council all efforts should be aimed at improving, and, where necessary, rationalizing this system. We must bear in mind the words of the former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, who, in his last message to this body cautioned: "the Council must be careful to avoid any innovation that would erode or undermine the independence of the special procedures, or of the High Commissioner and her staff". Access granted to special procedures mandate holders is imperative, as they are the trusted ears and eyes, as well as the helping hand of the international community. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour put it: "they give voice to the victims of human rights abuses, factual elements to governments to shape appropriate remedial policies, and will offer invaluable guidance to this Council as they did to the Commission".

Hungary has long time ago issued a standing invitation for all special procedures, and cooperates with them fully. We urge all to act likewise, and we believe the sooner the better.

In this context, I wish to recall the constructive visits we had in the past years to Hungary, by the Special Rapporteur on the freedom of expression and opinion, the Special Rapporteur on racial discrimination, and recently, last June, by the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Ms. Gay McDougall. I personally had the opportunity to meet her and have a good-spirited exchange of views on the protection of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. In her report on the visit, the Independent Expert formulated a number of recommendations that my Government will be definitely studying in detail, and we'll be happy to keep our

dialogue going on the implementation of those suggestions. Some of them are easier to implement than others, and as a former Minister for equal opportunities, I recognize fully the complexity of measures needed to address the challenging needs of one particular minority in our country, the Roma.

It is my hope that this visit will also encourage other Member States to similarly discuss with an open mind the practical aspects of national implementation in this particular field. We were happy to share our experiences and lessons learnt with the Independent Expert, and benefited from her evaluation of our achievements. The Independent Expert's mandate remains an important tool in the international promotion and protection of minority rights. Together with the achievements of the Working Group on Minorities, it has a real potential to further enhance the understanding of, and, consequently, full respect for, the rights of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Mr. President,

The past year saw important achievements in the field of the codification of human rights law. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances are significant steps towards closing the still existing gaps in the international protection of human rights. The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is designed to guarantee all fundamental and civil as well as political rights for more than 650 million people in the world by ensuring equal opportunities for them in all aspects of life. We hope that, after the opening for signature, the Convention would soon enter into force. In this respect, Hungary is fully committed to the comprehensive implementation of this new legally binding international instrument. The Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances constitutes a major step forward in a long historical process. Furthermore, it represents an extremely important development in the fight against enforced disappearances and for the protection of victims and their families.

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Council is at an important milestone right now. When devoting most of our efforts to the institution building processes, we must bear in mind that the building the

foundations of which we are laying down now will stay with us for a long time to come. We must make sure that it will be able to withstand the tests of future challenges.

While focussing the efforts on the architecture of the Human Rights Council, we must not lose sight of the *plight of the victims* of human rights violations. Despite the best efforts of this Council, the United Nations system as a whole, regional organizations and national governments, the rights of countless human beings continue to be violated around the world. We cannot remain idle to the pleas of the oppressed. We, in this Council and elsewhere, must redouble our efforts to build a world based on the inherent dignity of the human person, and the respect of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Hungary stands ready to cooperate fully in ensuring the complete and effective protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you, Mr. President