



**ADDRESS BY THE VICE-MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
LITHUANIA, MR. JAROSLAV NEVEROVIČ
TO THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
GENEVA, 14 MARCH 2007**

Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First I would like to make a statement that Lithuania aligns itself with the statement of the European Union presented by the esteemed minister of Germany.

Human rights form essential part of our lives. Their existence is inseparable from human nature and they lie at the very core of our existence. No one can be denied human rights. These are very common notions which seem to be dear for everyone. However, these ideas must be repeated again and again in order not to be forgotten. And they are *raison d'être* of the institution that I have this great honour and privilege to address.

We are approaching one year anniversary of the Human Rights Council. This was and still is a crucial year for defining its further activities and its future role in the world. Institution building process still continues and it will greatly influence the results of the Council's work. I would like to thank the President of the Council Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba for his tireless leadership and also would like to thank all colleagues who work very hard creating procedures of the Human Rights Council.

All of us need a set of efficient procedures which would allow us to reach the goals that were set up when the UN human rights machinery reform process started. If we let it to become a body of formal discussions, what influence to the real situation of real people we may expect? The question remains, do we wish it to be efficient and effective or we would rather go for a little less ambitious institution. Future success of the Council is only in our hands. The Council will be as good as we will be able to create it. We should recognize that responsibility for all of the success as well as failures would lie with the States that set the rules of the Council.

The primary responsibility to guarantee human rights is self evident duty of every state. Duty to guarantee human rights requires from the States actions on both national and international level. It is also evident that efforts of a single nation must be supported by international activities and partners. Therefore, we need a body that can assist in these international efforts by providing forum for substantive discussion, also evaluation services and advice. The work on these issues has already started and I would very much wish that it will be completed until the deadline in June.

The General Assembly resolution 60/251 provides a solid ground for the institution based on spirit of cooperation. The resolution is very explicit about this and other principles on which the Council should rest. They also include requirement for a genuine dialogue and capacity strengthening. The aim of the Council's activities must benefit all human beings, hence the activities must be result oriented. We should be careful that the procedures presently under consideration allow the above-mentioned principles to be effectively implemented. Otherwise, these ideals will remain just words.

Mr. Chairman,

The Council is frequently compared with the Commission on Human Rights; however it should be very clear that the Council is not a reformed Commission. It is a new body. Such understanding lets us not only to set new procedures, but also to use new thinking. Lithuania considers that now there is an excellent window of opportunity for creating Council that is based on values.

Mr. Chairman,

While the Council goes through the institution building process it should not leave pressing human rights issues outside of its attention. Previous sessions, either regular or special ones, prove that the Council has determination to address them. This session should not be an exception. Many human rights issues remain on the table and the Council will have to deal with them urgently. The Council already did and further must demonstrate that it can find new ways of dealing with the most complicated situations. Hence, it is our hope that the institution building process will go side by side with the discussions and actions on substantive issues.

Regarding particular thematic questions that should be addressed in this or other upcoming sessions, my country would expect attention for such issues as human rights defenders, freedom of opinion and expression, rights of the child, and death penalty.

What else raises our concern is certain attitude that prevents implementation of the decisions of the Council. We already have an example of avoidance to implement the decision adopted by consensus. Here I am referring to the resolution on the human rights in Darfur, adopted at the fourth special session of the Council last year. Better cooperation and more good will, would have proved genuine determination of the Government of Sudan to make changes for the improvement of human rights.

We are also interested in implementation of pledges and commitments undertaken when presenting candidatures for election to the Council. The pledges and commitments make sense only when they are implemented. Unfortunately, until now we do not have a mechanism that would look into this issue. It is my belief that all States undertook necessary steps in honouring them, but it would be useful to give this issue more consideration in the future. Therefore, I would like to suggest establishing a procedure of gathering information about implementation of pledges and commitments. Yearly report could be prepared after each year of membership at the Council and presented to the plenary meeting. Such process would provide transparency of implementation of pledges and commitments, as well as it would encourage States to give more attention to their undertakings.

Mr. Chairman,

We must not forget that people of the world are watching with many hopes at the Council activities. The Council can make the difference. It is obligation of Member States to create conditions that will allow the Council to make this impact on the ground for improvement of particular situations. Effectiveness of this body, both in institution building process and in dealing with substantive issues, will be evaluated by this improvement, thus results must be tangible. The beginning of Council's work is full of hopes and we want to believe that this institution lives up to the expectations for improvement of human rights conditions for all people.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.