

THE REPUBLIC OF

KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION

1 Avenue de l'Ariana, 1202 Geneve

(Check against delivery)

Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Cho Jung-pyo

Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Republic of Korea

at

The 4th Session of the Human Rights Council

Geneva

14 March 2007

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

At the 2005 World Summit, the Heads of State and Government affirmed that human rights are one of the three pillars of the United Nations, along with development, and peace and security. These three pillars are inherently interlinked, mutually reinforcing and crucial for the collective well-being of humanity. More importantly, our security and development efforts may ultimately fail unless human rights are fully respected and guaranteed. Recognizing this, the leaders took decisive steps to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery. The establishment of an effective, strong and credible Human Rights Council is, therefore, central to this endeavor.

Mr. President,

Since last June, significant progress has been made in terms of institution-building for the Human Rights Council. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you and the six ambassadors who have worked as facilitators of the Working Groups for the devotion and contribution.

While appreciating the significant strides made thus far, we are also fully cognizant of the concerns arising within and outside the Council. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed his concerns last year regarding some Council members aiming to weaken or eliminate the Council's ability to scrutinize and respond to certain kinds of human rights violations or to the actions of some countries. Many NGOs point to the Council's disproportionate focus on violations in particular areas. The solidarity of certain regional and political groups within the Council which impedes human rights issues from being duly dealt with is another source of concern.

Mr. President,

It is worthwhile to recall GA Resolution 60/251 which mandated the Council an all-encompassing responsibility to promote and protect human rights. It is also clear that this mandate applies to all situations in all countries. This is the first and foremost principle we should bear in mind during our deliberations.

For the Council to be a truly effective human rights machinery, it should be equipped with sufficient means to carry out its mandate. Going beyond mere dialogue and cooperation, it must be able to expeditiously respond to human rights abuses, in particular gross and systematic violations of human rights. The Council is also required to make situation-specific

responses, ranging from advice and assistance to public condemnation. The success of the Council depends on its ability to implement its decisions.

The General Assembly, in establishing the Council, placed great emphasis on constructive international dialogue and cooperation in the work of the Council. Different conditions and capabilities in each country necessitate a credible culture of dialogue and cooperation. In this regard, we attach particular importance to the promotion of inter-regional dialogue.

Mr. President,

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) will be a new and central element for determining the extent to which the Council contributes to the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Therefore, the UPR should be a meaningful and serious exercise for the advancement of situation of people in need of protection.

With their independent expertise and assessment which are indispensable for the effective protection of human rights, the Special Procedures are the essence of the human rights mechanism. They should not be the victims of politicization, nor subject to any governmental control. The Council should build upon the active participation of all major stakeholders in its work, including civil society, national human rights institutions and other UN bodies. Inclusiveness must be the hallmark of the Council's work.

We support the High Commissioner's Plan of Action and her strategies to implement her Plan, namely, strengthening engagement with countries, exercising leadership and building partnerships inside and outside of the UN. This will enhance the capacity of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to achieve its overarching goals of protecting people's rights on the ground and helping to empower them to realize their rights. In particular, we welcome the High Commissioner's effort to place women's human rights and gender issues at the core of the work of the Office. We also stress the High Commissioner's more active role in the deliberations of other UN institutions, in particular Security Council in meeting her own responsibility to prevent human rights violations and respond to human rights emergencies.

Mr. President,

The situation in Darfur calls for swift action by the international community and I look forward to productive deliberations on this subject at this session of the Council. At this point, the credibility of the Council will depend, at least in part, upon its response to the Darfur crisis.

Despite the failure of the High-Level Mission to carry out its mission inside Sudan, we feel that the Mission helped put forward practical measures to protect the civilian population in Darfur. Building on this, the Council should seek to identify further measures to protect the civilian population in Darfur.

Mr. President,

The Government of the Republic of Korea shares the concerns with the international community on the human rights situation in North Korea. In line with its current policy of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation, my Government will continue to make efforts to bring about substantial improvements of conditions of life in the DPRK.

Mr. President,

The Government of the Republic of Korea places great importance on human rights as a universally shared value steadfastly advocated by the United Nations for six decades. Having been inspired by the UN's commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout its own process of democratization and economic development, the Republic of Korea attests to the imperative of human rights in the betterment of societies. My Government regards the promotion and protection of human rights as a priority in its national as well as foreign policy goals. It is firmly committed to continuing to do its part in promoting human rights worldwide as well as within Korea.

My delegation is very pleased to report that last October the Republic of Korea acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Further, we are actively striving to *withdraw our reservations* to and ratify other UN human rights instruments. These include, among others, reservations to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the UN Convention against Torture and the CEDAW. This year, my government plans to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Conventions for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in March and September, respectively.

In addition, following UN recommendations, the National Action Plan on Human Rights (NAP) for 2007-2011 is being finalized. We expect to be able to publish this plan in the first half of this year. This blueprint for our human rights policy envisions a variety of institutional provisions to protect socially vulnerable and minority groups. Other *legal improvement* will also be actively promoted in a wide array of fields such as gender equality, labor rights and the protection of minorities including foreign migrant workers.

Mr. President,

While there are many important technical issues to be addressed, the most decisive factor in determining the success of the Council is our collective political will and commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. We must make the Council a stronger and more effective body not only through our words but more importantly through our deeds. We have in front of us a historic opportunity that we should not let pass us by.

Thank you.