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ADDRESS

BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE HUMAN SECURITY NETWORK

AT THE
4TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Geneva, 13 March 2007

Mr President, Madame High Commissioner, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the Human Rights Council on behalf of the Human Security Network, namely Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Thailand, Slovenia and the observer country South Africa.

Nine months ago we met in Geneva at the first meeting of the newly established Human Rights Council. We met here with great expectations. The forming of a new body was part of a wider United Nations reform with which we finally put proper emphasis on the interconnectedness between security, development and respect for human rights. With the establishment of the Human Rights Council we have given the respect and promotion of fundamental human rights an equal footing with security and socio-economic development.

The priorities that Human Security Network expressed at the very first session of the Human Rights Council are still valid and accurate. We continue to aim at full implementation of UN General Assembly resolution 60/251 and the realization of the World Summit Outcome Document, including the concept of the responsibility to protect.

We have all had great hopes for the new human rights body. And indeed, we continue to hope that the Council will prove its ability not only to react to the most grave human rights situations, but to prevent grave situations occurring in the first place by focusing on the concrete implementation of human rights, cooperative approaches, and the active involvement of civil society. We are pleased also with the quality of interactive dialogues with special mechanisms of the Council. Equally, the closer cooperation of the Council with civil society has proven to be an indispensable element of its efficiency in the promotion and protection of human rights.

However, the institution building of the Council, for which we assigned the first year of its existence, is not yet finished. In fact, we are at the most critical moment of this process. We still want the same as we did at the beginning: an efficient Council whose activities are based on cooperation and dialogue. Let us therefore now concentrate on the institution building process, in order to be able to complete it by the 18th of June 2007. We are all aware that there are people out there whose fundamental human rights are violated on daily basis. And we are also all aware of the need for further promotion of the worldwide respect for human rights.

Unfortunately, as we know, there is still no perfect place on Earth when it comes to the respect for human rights. That is why we have decided for a universal mechanism, the Universal Periodic Review, which will periodically review each of our countries. Let us make this Universal Periodic Review a mechanism that will enable us to use available expertise and reliable sources for objective and non-selective reviews of individual countries. At the same time the Review must be based on dialogue and cooperation with the countries under scrutiny, with a view to achieve concrete improvements.

We have replaced the Commission for Human Rights with the Human Rights Council because we wanted to build on its achievements and improve its deficiencies. The Commission had developed some mechanisms that proved to be efficient. It is our strong belief that such proven mechanisms must find their place in the new structure of the Human Rights Council.

Following the institution building phase, the Human Right Council will once again focus on its primary mission. One of the issues we see as crucial in addressing in this context is the situation of children around the world. We urge the Council to systematically include and mainstream the rights of children in the work of all special procedures. Joint activities of the Network on this issue were carried out in the UN framework in the last year. The Network participated in an open debate in the Security Council on children in armed conflicts, in which the newly established working group and the work of special representative of the UN Secretary General in this domain were supported. The Network also gave its support to the long expected UN Study on Violence against Children as the first consolidated UN endeavour to shed light on the extent of violence against children worldwide.

The Network will continue to deal with violence against children in a holistic way taking into account all different aspects of the issue, such as children affected in armed conflicts, violence against children in different social areas, HIV/Aids affected children, migrant children and their human rights and the youth in urban arenas. We shall advocate such approach also in the UN debates on this matter and continue supporting human rights education and learning at all levels. With this in mind we intend to focus our debate on violence against children at the 9th Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network taking place in Ljubljana, Slovenia in May 2007.

Thank you.