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BY

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AT THE
4TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Geneva, 13 March 2007

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me now address you in my national capacity.

To begin with, we fully align with the EU presidency's speech, presented here yesterday by Foreign Minister Steinmeier.

(Our commitments in the field of human rights)

Respect for human rights is at the core of the existence of Slovenia as an independent state and, as such, represents an important segment of our foreign policy. Let me underline our firm commitment to strive for the universality and indivisibility of all human rights.

We have signed and ratified all major human rights instruments and intend to sign and ratify the two most recent conventions, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, and the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in the near future. Slovenia has and will continue to actively demonstrate its support for the drafting of an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Slovenia has decided to take its commitments one step further and to present its candidature for a membership in the Council for the period 2007-2010 at the elections this coming May in the UN General Assembly in New York.

Slovenia pledges to strive for the protection and promotion of *all* human rights, civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. We would like to contribute responsibly and in cooperation with others in furthering the Council's work in this initial phase of its functioning. As a small state we firmly believe in the importance of the principle of rotation among wider UN membership and can thus aspire to the Council membership only rarely. We pledge to promote transparency and good working exchange not only with Council member states but also with its observer states.

(Generally on our priorities with regard to the HRC)

Allow me to mention some of the topics that we in Slovenia see as priorities. The work on the establishment of the Human Rights Council has not yet been completed. This session of the Council should therefore primarily deal with institution building – and we stand ready to constructively contribute to it. In our opinion it is extremely important that the Human Rights Council provide an adequate response to human rights crises, when they occur and based on recommendations for action from UN human rights mechanisms. All states need to cooperate fully and *in bona fide* with the mechanisms, including by allowing their visits to their territories. At the current session, among others we are facing in particular two grave situations that warranted establishment of the Council's missions – that of the Middle East and that of Darfur. Such missions are crucial in enabling the HRC to adopt effective follow-up measures.

Slovenia has and will continue to support the strengthening of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and we intend to substantially increase our voluntary contributions as soon as possible.

(On intercultural dialogue)

There is one very important but rarely mentioned mission of the Council, namely to further contribute to better understanding among different cultures and religions. The lasting and

increasing importance of this issue must find its place also here, as the Council is perfectly placed within the UN system to actively promote common understanding of fundamental human rights and to further the dialogue and cooperation among nations, cultures, ethnicities.

Slovenia has made intercultural dialogue one of its foreign- and cultural policy priorities. Living in its neighbourhood, my country is particularly concerned about the intercultural dialogue in the Balkans. While in the recent past the Region experienced one of the most destructive clashes among ethnic and religious groups, it is less known that the Region also has a good historic record of mutual respect. Indeed, people around the world could learn from the Balkans how to live in a multicultural society, where ethnically and religiously mixed societies are the traditional way of life.

As we speak, the future status of Kosovo is being settled. The prevention of potential instability that could influence the wider Balkan region is imperative and the intercultural dialogue in the Balkans is central to this exercise. As a part of the efforts to facilitate the intercultural dialogue, my Ministry and the Slovenia's based Centre for European Perspective launched a special Intercultural dialogue working group this February.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to conclude with good wishes to the Council for a successful work of this session. Let us make all the necessary efforts in these final stages of the institution building process to develop a solid basis that will enable us to protect and promote human rights worldwide.
Thank you